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ABSTRACT

Papers in this issue of the "CEIC Review" were commissioned for a national invitational conference on urban education. The papers provide an overview of research and practical applications of innovative school reforms being implemented across the United States. The many approaches to school reform explored in these papers range along a continuum of parental choice versus best practices. The following papers are included: (1) "Education in Cities: What Works and What Doesn't. Recommendations from a National Invitational Conference" (Margaret C. Wang and Herbert J. Walberg); (2) "School Variation and Systemic Instructional Improvement in Community School District #2, New York City" (Richard F. Elmore and Deanna Burney); (3) "Strategies for Urban Reform: What Works for the Houston Independent School District" (Rod Paige and Susan Sciafani); (4) "The New York State Reform Program: The Incentive Effects of Minimum Competency Exams" (John H. Bishop and Ferran Mane); (5) "Improving Results for Children and Families by Connecting Collaborative Sevices with School Reform Efforts" (Margaret C. Wang); (6) "Trends and Lessons in School-Community Initiatives" (Atelia I. Melaville with Martin J. Blank); (7) "Community for Learning: Connection with Community Services" (JoAnn B. Manning); and (8) "Schools, Community-Based Interventions, and Children's Learning and Development: What's the Connect?" (Katherine K. Merseth, Lisbeth B. Schorr, and Richard F. Elmore). (SLD) (SLD)

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Education in Cities: What Works and What Doesn't

Recommendations from a National Invitational Conference

Margaret C. Wang, Director, National Center on Education in the Inner Cities at Temple University Center for Research in Human Development and Education and Herbert J. Walberg, University of Illinois at Chicago

In this issue of the CEIC *Review*, papers commissioned for a national invitational conference on "Education in Cities: What Works and What Doesn't" are summarized. The papers provide an overview of research and practical applications of innovative—even radical—school reforms being implemented across the nation. Cosponsored by the Johnson Foundation and the National Center on Education in the Inner Cities and the Laboratory for Student Success at Temple University Center for Research in Human Development and Education, the conference was held on November 9-11, 1998 at the Wingspread Conference Center in Racine, Wisconsin.

The conference organizers brought together education leaders and scholars known for their differing views. Also represented were parents, teachers' union leaders, principals, superintendents, and state and federal officials. The overall goals were to provide a national forum for examining findings from the latest and most significant research on school reform and to showcase school systems and programs that appear to be effective in achieving student success.

In addition to addressing the key issues framed by the commissioned papers, conference participants devoted much time in small work groups. They discussed what is known from research and practical applications of the various reform strategies and their implications for next-step recommendations to advance schools' capacity for achieving student success.

Despite their differing opinions, the conference participants respectfully heard views sharply different from their own. They made constructive suggestions for improved policies and research that would be more definitive with respect to opposing views.

Many approaches to school reform were discussed. They may be characterized as along a continuum of parental choice vs. best practices. Near one extreme are publicly and privately funded scholarships that allow parents to choose and even govern schools for their children. Near the other extreme are centralized state or district systems that specify uniform goals, policies, and programs for each school. The commissioned papers summarized in this issue of the CEIC *Review* describes these alternatives and a range of intermediate forms.

Parental Choice

Parental choice includes both charter schools and scholarships. Charter schools are paid for and are accountable to the public, but are governed by private boards and are, to varying degrees, independent of state regulations, local boards, and teachers' unions. "Weak" charter laws in some states, however, allow unsympathetic local boards to retain considerable operating control over charter school staff.

Private scholarships, now used in about 30 cities, are funded both by firms and wealthy individuals. They enable children and youth, usually from economically and educationally disadvantaged backgrounds, to attend private, that is, parochial and independent schools. Public scholarships distribute publicly funded scholarships to parents that can be employed in public and private schools.

(see **Education** on page 22)

The National Center on Education in the Inner Cities is a unit in the Temple University Center for Research in Human Development and Education, an interdisciplinary center devoted to fostering healthy developmental and educational success of children and families in this nation's urban communities. Inquiries about the work of the Center should be sent to Information Services, CRHDE, Temple University, 1301 Cecil B. Moore Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19122-6091. Copyright © 1999

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School Variation and Systemic Instructional Improvement in Community School District #2, New York City

Richard F. Elmore and Deanna Burney

One of 32 community school districts in New York City, District #2 includes 24 elementary schools, 7 junior high or intermediate schools, and 17 "option" schools organized around themes with an array of grade configurations. The High Performance Learning Project, described in this article, grew out of the district's interest in moving beyond its current instructional strategy to one focused more explicitly on the use of standards, including both standards of instructional practice and student performance standards, to guide and motivate instructional improvement. One question remained in the background in the early stages of the district's reform process: How do we reconcile the requirements of system-wide standards of practice and performance with the fundamental reality of school-site differences? This article offers a few provisional answers to that basic question and ends with a few additional questions to ponder.

Background Information on the District

The central tenet of standards-based instructional improvement is that entire school systems can move collectively in the direction of more ambitious teaching and learning through a focus on common principles of instructional practice, clear standards for student learning, and assessments that accurately capture instruction and learning. The magnitude of the tension between systemic expectations and school variability can be seen by comparison of demographic information across District #2. The district's schools vary significantly in size, from over 1,000 students to under 200. The proportion of students eligible for free and reduced-price lunches varies from 100% to under 20%. Eighteen schools have more than 66% of their students coming from low-income families, and six schools have 20% or fewer of their students from low-income families. The proportion of limited English proficient (LEP) students—predominantly Hispanic and Chinese in District #2—varies from a high of nearly 50% to a low of less than 1%. Some schools serve LEP populations that are primarily Spanish-speaking, others primarily Chinese-speaking, and some a combination of both. Schools likewise are located in communities with very different racial and ethnic compositions. Eighteen schools are comprised of student populations that are more than two-thirds African-American, Hispanic, and Asian, while four schools have populations that are more than two-thirds White. As in most urban systems, District #2 has many schools in which the student populations are relatively mobile. In nine schools, the proportion of students who have changed schools within the last two years is greater than 20%.

Variations in levels of student performance can also be examined by school site. Aggregate performance on a city-wide assessment of reading and mathematics has shown steady gains from the inception of the district's improvement strategy, and the district ranks second in the city among community districts on aggregate performance. Twenty-two schools have less than 10% of their students scoring in the lowest quartile, while 14 schools have more than 20% of their students scoring in the lowest quartile. Fourteen schools have more than 40% of their students scoring in the highest quartile, while 15 have 25% or less of their students scoring in the highest quartile. Clearly, then, even when overall performance is high, schools face difficulties in connecting instructional improvement with student performance, and these differences are played out in the myriad variations in the students, teachers, and communities that constitute a school.

The Inquiry

To explore the problem of school variability and systemic improvement, District #2 engaged in two types of inquiry. First, the researchers talked at length with key system-level administrators about how they think about and respond to differences among schools. Second, principals were asked how they interpret and respond to system-level expectations in the context of the particularities of their schools. The result of this inquiry is a framework that captures a "theory of action" and a "theory in use" that, together, capture the implicit and informal adaptations made by system-level administrators.

Theory of Action: Systemic Instructional Improvement and School Variability

The district's theory of action about systemic improvement and school variability can be summarized briefly: Principals are the key agents in adapting and orchestrating system-level expectations to the particular conditions of schools, and their capacity to do this depends heavily on their skills in dealing with instructional issues. Schools constitute unique bundles of attributes, and skillful systemic improvement depends on system-

level administrators developing a deep understanding of school-level particularities and tailoring their actions accordingly. The skillful reconciliation between system-level expectations depends heavily on (a) bilateral negotiations between system administrators and principals, where principals are expected to actively represent the particularities of their schools and system administrators are expected to represent system-level expectations; and (b) common learning activities cutting across schools that create and reinforce system-wide norms. Increasing reliance on the quality of student work as the standard by which schools' success will be evaluated creates a language between principals and system administrators that focuses attention on a common attribute of classrooms, rather than characteristics that distinguish one school from another.

Theory in Use: Differential Treatment in the Face of Constraints

Much of the investment in instructional improvement and professional development in District #2 has come at a serious cost to system-level administrative resources. System-level administrators cope with this challenge by making hard choices about how to allocate their time. Among system-wide administrators, a pattern of differential treatment, a "theory in use" becomes evident, which is analogous to the situation in a hospital's emergency room. These administrators, like doctors, must decide which, among equally urgent and deserving cases, require the greatest attention at a given moment.

District #2 administrators seem to group schools into implicit categories in order to direct and focus their attention:

- *Free-agent.* "Free-agent" schools are close to the "ideal" in District #2's model of continuous instructional improvement and professional development.
- *With-the-drill.* "With-the-drill" schools manifest strong leadership according to the District #2 model but are in the early or middle stages of the developmental path that district administrators see as leading to school-wide instructional improvement.
- *Watch-list.* "Watch-list" schools generally manifest strong leadership and are on a developmental path in instructional improvement by the District #2 model, but they are singled out for special attention and intensive scrutiny for reasons usually having to do with lower-than-acceptable student performance on standardized tests, as well as highly variable quality of student work.
- *Off-the-screen.* These schools are seen by district administrators as presenting formidable problems for improvement, usually because they lack strong principals, and the district has, for a variety of reasons, found it difficult to change their leadership.

The View from the Schools

What does instructional improvement look like from the perspective of principals? How do the views of principals complement or conflict with those of district-level administrators? Interviews with District #2 principals revealed these preliminary findings:

1. The principals clearly and consistently report the values and goals of the district's strategy for instructional improvement, even while their implementation of the strategy is variable.
2. Most principals perceive a high degree of differential access to district administrators and to resources for instructional improvement, and for the most part they approve of this differential treatment.
3. The principals perceive a more or less explicit matching of leadership to schools in the district's assignment of principals, and they see themselves as having skills and aptitudes that are tailored to their settings.
4. The principals perceive that they participate in a vertically integrated structure of values and learning opportunities that are designed to create a common culture.
5. The principals see themselves as among the key purveyors of an increasingly explicit and widespread "technical culture" around instructional improvement that has a distinct set of norms, a professional language, and a set of practices.
6. The principals endorse for the most part the application of high standards across all schools and the view that school staffs should be held accountable for attaining them.
7. The principals report substantial variation in their relationships with the teachers' union representative, but do not use union relations as an excuse or explanation for their own performance.

Conclusion

Given this generally positive picture, we are left with several questions about the broader issues of systemic improvement and school variability that may be helpful to other districts as they go through the process of systemic

(see **School Variation** on page 23)

Strategies for Urban Reform:

What Works for the Houston Independent School District

Rod Paige and Susan Sclafani, Houston Independent School District

Overview of the District

The Houston Independent School District (HISD) is the largest district in Texas and sixth largest in the nation. Covering 312 square miles with a population of over 210,000 students in 280 schools, HISD includes students from 90 countries, of which 52% are Hispanic American, 35% are African American, 11% are White, and 2% are Asian American. In 1996-97, HISD identified 57,076 limited English proficient students representing approximately 73 native languages. As reflected by free- and reduced-lunch statistics, the number of economically disadvantaged students, currently at 73%, increases annually. The district mobility rate is 38.2%. HISD is fiscally independent of municipal or county government, with state-level oversight and governance provided by the Texas Education Agency.

Improved Academic Performance

State Accountability

Over the last 6 years, the state of Texas has removed previous requirements and mandates and replaced them with an accountability system focused on results. This change has enabled HISD to alter the way it organizes and provides educational services to children. In addition, state statutes since 1990 have provided greater flexibility to schools to redesign their educational programs to meet individual student needs.

The Texas Accountability System focuses on student dropout rates and student performance on state-mandated, criterion-referenced tests. The system establishes levels of performance based on the percentage of students passing the tests in reading, mathematics, and writing at the 70% level. The initial categories established for schools were:

low-performing	fewer than 20% of the students passing
acceptable	more than 20%, but fewer than 70% passing
recognized	more than 70%, but fewer than 90% passing
exemplary	more than 90% passing

These percentage levels have been raised each year. By 1998, the state required 40% (as opposed to 20%) to pass for "acceptable" and 80% (as opposed to 70%) for "recognized."

At first, the accountability system was based on the number of students passing all tests, but it now reflects the total number of students passing each test. However, the easing of standards in the first case was more than compensated for by changes in the consideration of the test scores and drop-out rates by specified student subgroups: African-American, Hispanic, "other," and economically disadvantaged. A school's accountability rating is now based on the performance rating of the lowest-performing subgroup in any subject area. For example, if 92% of the students at a school of 2,000 students pass the test, but there is a subgroup of as few as 30 students in a school whose passing rate is 38%, the school is ranked as low-performing. This rule has helped to focus the school's attention on the performance of *all* students.

Targeted Schools

HISD's performance on the Texas Accountability System has improved annually. The number of schools rated as "exemplary" has increased from zero in 1993 to 36 in 1998, even with the higher standards. The number of low-performing schools has decreased from 55 to 8 in the same period. The improvement in schools designated as low-performing in 1993 has been largely the result of the district's program for targeted schools. This program provides low-performing schools with training and support in data analysis, program planning, identification of effective strategies, professional development, and acquisition of resources to improve the academic program.

Each targeted school is paired with a team of principals, curriculum specialists, and researchers to observe current practices, discuss issues and data with the staff, and assist in the development and implementation of a district-funded improvement plan. Originally, the targeted schools were the 55 low-performing schools. This year, targeted schools were those with fewer than 50% of the students passing. Targeted schools can receive additional funds for up to 3 years that can be used for teacher training; extended-day or Saturday tutorial programs; additional teachers to lower the student/teacher ratio or provide expertise in specific subject areas; manipulatives, books, and materials; and/or establishment of computer-assisted instruction laboratories.

Team visits are made to targeted schools on at least a quarterly basis to monitor the effectiveness of the implementation and to consider revisions to the improvement plan. Many of the schools that were targeted in 1993-94 are now "recognized" or "exemplary" schools.

Districtwide Initiatives Contributing to Academic Success

In addition to the state accountability system, a variety of districtwide initiatives have contributed to HISD's improvement. These include efforts to increase graduation requirements, define successful reading programs, improve the quality of mathematics instruction, and offer objective clarification for staff on meeting state accountability requirements (see Project CLEAR below).

- High school graduation requirements: Since 1994, the Board has worked closely with parents and the business community to develop and approve expanded graduation requirements to include 3 years of mathematics and science; 1 year of computer applications; and a three-unit focus on career and technology, science/mathematics/technology, or humanities. In 1996-97, HISD eliminated all remedial mathematics and science courses. Algebra is the first course required for all students. Integrated Physics, Chemistry, Biology, and either Chemistry or Physics are the minimum graduation requirements in science.
- *Reading initiative*: Over the last 2 years, HISD has focused on training teachers in grades K-3 and 4-6 on the components of an effective reading program, providing alphabetic phonics strategies for middle-school reading teachers, and codesigning a university course on addressing needs of high school students with reading deficiencies. Schools have written grant proposals to implement effective reading strategies and have incorporated resources from the district's technology department to improve reading practice and assessment.
- *Mathematics initiative*: Structured district-wide initiatives in mathematics have focused on the improvement of instruction in elementary and middle schools, as well as algebra classes in high schools. When the district analyzed middle-school mathematics teachers' qualifications 4 years ago, it was determined that nearly 40% of those teachers had fewer than 12 hours of mathematics course work. Also, students' results on the Texas Accountability System measures documented lower performance on topics beyond arithmetic. The initiative began with college courses for math teachers taught on school campuses, as well as college-student tutors who could assist middle-school students while their teachers learned mathematical concepts. In recent years, the district has provided curriculum guides which align resources and activities with instruction and assessment; professional development services; collaborative teacher planning across grades and between schools at elementary, middle, and high-school levels; and provision of subject-area experts in district offices to observe, provide information, conduct demonstration lessons, and share strategies. Student performance on the state-mandated achievement tests has improved each year since the inception of these programs.
- *Project CLEAR—Clarifying Learning to Enhance Achievement Results:* HISD recognized that many of the state's mandates are open to broad interpretation, so that all students may not receive the intended, challenging curriculum. While the state has begun on-line projects to provide sample activities and units that demonstrate the meaning of its specific expectations of students, HISD has taken additional steps to ensure that all students have equitable and uniform access to essential learning by initiating an objectives clarification project during the 1998-99 academic year in mathematics, writing, and science.

Conclusion

The accountability system created by the state, combined with the district's efforts, have focused teachers' and administrators' attention on improving achievement for all students. It has been Houston's experience that the key to improvement is the ability to identify what needs to be done and provide assistance in doing it. When teachers and other school staff know what they are doing well, and what needs to be improved, they are willing to do what it takes for students to be successful. ▣

The New York State Reform Program:
The Incentive Effects of Minimum Competency Exams

John H. Bishop and Ferran Mane, Cornell University

Educational reformers and many Americans believe that teachers ask too little of their pupils. Parents, particularly those of African-American and Hispanic students, are quick to criticize the low expectations and goals that teachers and school administrators often set for their children. These low expectations result in what they perceive to be watered-down curricula, a tolerance for mediocre teaching and inappropriate student behavior.

For decades, state-level policymakers and educational leaders have been concerned about these problems. One common response to the problem of low expectations and low achievement has been the use of minimum competency exams (MCEs), whereby schools define standards for learning, test students against these standards, and require that students pass exams assessing the achievement of these standards before graduating.

This article examines the impact of making high school graduation contingent on passing a series of MCEs on high school dropout rates, college entrance rates, and college dropout rates; the quality of the jobs obtained by high school graduates; and the different effects, if any, for students from less advantaged or minority backgrounds. In addition, an overview of New York State's Regents Exams policy is provided, and implications for state policy are drawn.

The Effects of MCEs on Dropout Rates, College Attendance, and Wages

A number of studies have examined the effect of minimum competency exams graduation requirements on enrollment rates and high school graduation rates. Research has shown that dropout rates were reduced by increases in the number of courses necessary to graduate, but not by MCEs. Other studies have revealed that there is no evidence in these data that MCEs of the type that existed at the beginning of the 1990s lower graduation rates. New York State's voluntary Regents exams also appear to have no significant effects on dropout rates or graduation rates.

MCEs are hypothesized to improve job opportunities in two ways. First, researchers indicate that, by improving student achievement, MCEs raise worker productivity. Second, MCEs signal employers that "all of the graduates of this high school meet or exceed your hiring standards." With the MCE requirement, the school's diploma now signals more than just seat time; it signals meeting or exceeding certain minimum standards in reading, writing, and mathematics. This should make local employers more willing to hire the school's recent graduates. The MCE graduation requirement should be particularly helpful in dispelling the stereotypes some employers have about minority youth.

MCEs have been found to have a significant positive effect on the probability of attending college in a majority of subgroups during the four-year period immediately following high school graduation. The positive effect was largest for students in the middle and bottom of the test score distribution and tended to be greater in the second and third years following high school than in the first, fourth, and subsequent years. MCEs also have an immediate and significant impact on the college enrollment of low socioeconomic status (SES) students, while middle and high SES students are affected but not until the second and third year out of high school.

Students from low and moderate SES backgrounds had significantly higher wage rates when they attended MCE high schools. High SES students did not. Finally, MCEs appear to have increased the wage rates of minority youth but not White youth.

Except for Hispanics, graduates of MCE high schools did not earn more than graduates of non-MCE high schools in the years immediately following graduation. Earnings grew over time, however, so that by 1985 annual earnings were $484 higher for Whites, $808 higher for African Americans, and $703 higher for Hispanic Americans. For 1992 graduates, a number of the subgroups appear to have received statistically significant earnings benefits in the first calendar year after graduating from an MCE high school. Low-SES students who graduated from an MCE high school earned $694 extra, a more than 10% increase in earnings, their first year after graduation. Students from the middle of the test score distribution earned $424 extra (a 7.5% increase) when they graduated from a MCE high school.

MCEs are changing. New states and cities have introduced them, while others are improving their exams and raising the standards for graduation.

The New York State Regents Examinations: Implications for State Policy

New York State has been administering curriculum-based Regents Examinations to high

school students since June 1878. The examinations are taken throughout a student's high school career in such subjects as mathematics, biology, global studies, chemistry, English, American history, foreign language, and physics.

For students, the stakes attached to Regents Exams are not high. Exam grades count for less than an eighth of the final grade in the course and influence only the type of diploma received. College admissions decisions depend primarily on grades and SAT scores, not Regents exam scores. Employers tend to ignore exam results when making hiring decisions.

All of this is about to change. The New York State Board of Regents has announced that by the year 2003, students must take new, more demanding Regents exams in algebra, geometry, global studies, American history, and laboratory science and pass them at the 55% level. Once schools have adjusted to the new exams and the requirement that all students take them, the Regents intend to raise the scores necessary to pass from the 55% level to 60% and then to 65%.

Requiring that all students reach the Regents standard in five core subjects has the potential to significantly increase student achievement, college attendance and completion, and the quality of jobs that students get after high school. The biggest beneficiaries of the policy will be the students, often from disadvantaged backgrounds, who have been encouraged or allowed to avoid rigorous courses in the past.

Problems, however, may be inevitable. Once students start failing Regents exams and having to repeat courses in order to graduate, a crescendo of complaints will follow. Claims will be made that schools have not done enough to help students succeed on the new exams. What can the Regents and the state legislature do to help local schools meet their obligation to help students meet the new higher standards? How can the number of dropouts and graduation delays be minimized?

The most important change will be to increase the amount of time that struggling students spend on the task of learning. This is the central recommendation of the Board of Regents, a representative group of teachers, school administrators, and parent representatives that was convened by New York State's Commissioner of Education. This group recommended a radical increase in the amount of instruction that struggling and disadvantaged students receive. Additional recommendations made by this group include:

- Each school district and each school should be required to have a grade-specific curriculum consistent with State standards.
- Each school district should have, at every grade level, an assessment system to provide information on student performance and to prepare all students to meet the standards.
- Enrichment and remediation programs should be provided as additions to and reinforcement of the core curriculum within the school year (i.e., after-school, evening, and weekend instruction).
- When a student fails to meet academic expectations, based on grade-level assessments, that student should be required to attend summer school.
- Each district should provide professional development to all staff in grades K-12 to enable them to assist students to meet the new graduation requirements.
- Each district should have a plan that explains the movement of students from grade to grade and identifies the ways that schools engage parents, students, and other community members to help students understand and achieve higher standards.

Many school districts in New York State have already started shifting to an all-Regents curriculum in anticipation of the new requirements, and the numbers of students taking Regents-level courses and passing Regents exams is rising. Between 1995 and 1997, the proportion of students taking and passing Regents exams at the 65% correct level rose from 50.3 to 56.3% in English, from 53 to 59% in sequential mathematics I, and from 41 to 44% in biology.

Nevertheless, extremely high failure rates are predicted—between 30 and 50% in some subjects—the first time Regents Exams are administered to all students. Even if the reforms proposed above were implemented immediately, they would not have been in operation long enough to prevent the predicted high failure rates. Many students will have to retake examinations after taking additional academic courses or special summer makeup courses. Will this generate an increase in dropout rates as students despair of ever passing all five exams? Not necessarily. The authors predict that students will study harder and stay in high school longer. The tougher graduation requirements will not be fully phased in until the class of 2003. By 2007, drop-out rates are predicted to be at or below current levels; this will be accomplished without making the Regents Exams easier than they are right now.

Let us imagine, however, that the prediction of stable or rising high school completion rates is wrong. Would a 2-4% decline in completion rates imply that

(see **New York State** on page 24)

The Charter School Idea:

Transforming the Governance of Urban Public Schools

Bruno V. Manno, The Annie E. Casey Foundation

As of September 1998, nearly 1,200 charter schools are in operation across the United States, enrolling approximately 240,000 students. Thirty-four states and the District of Columbia have authorized a charter school law (though not all charter school laws are created equal). The charter notion enjoys wide bipartisan support, with President Clinton calling for 3,000 charter schools by decade's end. Charter schools may well be the most vibrant force in American education today, foreshadowing a revitalized K-12 public education—even in our nation's most challenged urban areas.

The charter school approach to educational governance can be helpful to those in urban areas laboring to broaden and improve the educational opportunities available to families and the educational outcomes achieved by urban school children. The governance of public education today is based on an approach in which schools are seen as uniform instruments of government (i.e., they are owned and operated by school boards), staffed by government (i.e., civil service) employees, and held accountable by complying with government regulations, central office prescriptions, and union contract provisions.

The charter strategy poses a challenge to this current understanding of public education governance. The charter school portends a view of a public school as any school that accepts all comers, is paid for by the public, and is accountable to a public authority for the results of student learning. Families should be free to choose among different, autonomous, and self-governing schools.

This article provides a brief overview of school and student data on urban charter schools, and examines four assumptions that undergird the charter idea while simultaneously challenging the conventional approach to the governance of public education.

Urban Charter Schools

Charter schools tend to be an urban phenomenon. In 1996-97, 51% of the then-existing 457 charter schools were located in large cities or on the urban fringe of a large city. And nearly one-third (32%) of the nation's charter school students attend schools in large cities.

Nearly 7 in 10 (68%) charter school students in large cities are from minority groups, compared to almost 8 in 10 (78%) other public school students in those communities. A charter school, therefore, is about as likely as a regular urban public school to have a large minority enrollment.

The median school size of a large city urban charter school (137 students) is much smaller than that of other public schools (625 students) in urban communities. And the median student/teacher ratio for a large city charter school (21.1:1) is greater than that of other public schools in the same location (19.3 :1).

How Charter Schools Challenge the Traditional Education System

There are over 15,000 local school systems in operation across the United States today, each with its own board and superintendent. The total public school payroll numbers nearly 5 million persons, and the schools spend about $255 billion, which averages to almost $5,700 per student. It is one of the largest bureaucracies in the world. Traditionally, public schools have been thought of as instruments of government, managed in a classic bureaucratic mode by lay boards that employ experts to carry out their directives. Public school systems are monopolies that typically deliver education through essentially identical schools. Reforms must be "systemic" and only the well-to-do have easy access to alternatives for their children. The quality of public education is gauged by inputs, resources, and compliance with rules. Results-based accountability is largely absent and resisted. Power rests with the producers, and the consumer is marginalized.

Charter schools point us toward a new conception of public education, one that replaces the old assumptions with a striking new paradigm. The charter movement rests on four different assumptions.

- *A "public" school is any school that's open to the public, paid for by the public, and accountable to the public. Government need not run it.*

The charter idea begins with the conviction that sound school choices can be provided to families under the umbrella of public education without micromanagement by government bureaucracies. Indeed, a charter school can be organized and run by almost anyone, including a committee of parents, a team of teachers, private corporations, or community organizations.

The charter concept affirms that schools need not be regulated into conformity and requires less bureaucracy and fewer regulations because it rejects the proposition that schools must be centrally managed and regulated according to a single formula. Instead, the charter—a license to operate for a certain period (usually five years)—lays out how the school will

organize and govern itself and what results it intends to produce.

This principle also applies to teaching. Charter schools in states with laws that provide schools with a strong dose of operational autonomy do not confine their pool of potential instructors and principals to graduates of teacher- or administrator-training programs. Individuals with sound character who know their subject well and want to teach children can work in a charter school. These new public teachers and administrators are creating a new education profession where individuals are paid (and retained) on the basis of their performance and are encouraged to be enterprising.

- *Public schools should be different in myriad ways and all families should be able to choose among them.*

The charter idea recognizes that people differ from each other along countless dimensions. If U.S. families can choose their own cars, houses, spouses, grocery stores, doctors, etc., why should they not also be free to choose the school that suits them best?

There is no single charter design. These schools are free to differ in their curriculum, instruction, and assessment; school organization; leadership and governance; staffing; parent and community involvement; scheduling; technology; and financing. Some charters also incorporate comprehensive efforts to take most or all of the "moving parts" of a school (whole school designs) and recreate the school in an integrated fashion. With a charter school, you can start from scratch and build an entire house or just renovate the kitchen.

- *What matters most is not the resources a school commands or the rules it obeys, but the results it produces.*

The charter concept is demanding with respect to results but relaxed about the means whereby those results are produced—the opposite of most conventional schools with their rigid adherence to bureaucratic requirements and obliviousness to pupil achievement. This is what makes charter schools so vibrant and promising an education reform strategy. They are accountable for results rather than following rules.

Charter accountability is twofold: to the market—the families of those who choose to attend a given school—and to the public authority that charters the school. The charter approach is not an unbridled, laissez-faire, free market mode. While market forces are necessary, they are not sufficient to provide suitable quality control. Neither is the charter strategy an example of "privatization," which means selling or transferring public assets to private owners who are accountable to their shareholders but not to any public authority. With the charter idea, the public will always retain an interest in the successful delivery of educational services paid for by public funds.

- *Each school is a small, self-governing community in which parents and teachers have valued roles.*

The charter idea focuses on individual schools, not school systems. The school makes its own decisions, so long as its results are satisfactory. Parents are ordinarily involved with governance, as are teachers and other education professionals, who are free from the micromanagement and constraints that come with central bureaucracies. So long as students attain the promised results and the customers remain satisfied, the school's staff can operate as it thinks best.

Charter schools are also voluntary communities. No one is sent to a charter school or forced to enroll in one or teach in one. Individuals are there—families, students, and educators—because they choose to be there.

The scale of a charter school is far smaller than that of most conventional public schools. Though the charter world is beginning to develop some multi-site operations and chains of schools, most charter schools are self-contained, and nearly all are small. With their small scale comes intimacy and familiarity, often missing from the larger and more anonymous institutions that typify American public education.

Finally, charter schools are not gated communities. They interact with the larger communities within which they exist. For example, they present opportunities to begin schools to non-profit institutions and community organizations that would not ordinarily be much involved with public education.

Conclusion

The charter strategy is changing the education world by inspiring educators and parents—and others, as well—to create independent public schools of choice that are freed from most bureaucratic hassles in exchange for a written contract to produce superior educational results. But how much of that change is for good? Now that we are beginning to discern a visible impact from the charter movement, attention must be turned to the important question of how these schools are actually doing. Are they successful enterprises? Are they boosting student achievement? How innovative are they? Because of the newness of the charter approach to school governance, it is difficult to discern how the movement will ultimately affect American public education. However, much of what has happened thus far bodes well for public education, in particular the governance of urban public schools. ▣

Turning Around Low-Performing Schools is Possible:
The Case of the DC Schools

JoAnn Manning, Laboratory for Student Success at Temple University Center for Research in Human Development and Education

This article summarizes the progress and outcomes of the implementation of the Community for Learning program (CFL), a comprehensive approach to school reform that aims to significantly improve student learning in six collaborative demonstration schools in the District of Columbia. This project is a joint venture between the District of Columbia Public Schools (DC Schools), the six demonstration schools, and the Laboratory for Student Success (LSS), the Mid-Atlantic Regional Educational Laboratory at Temple University Center for Research in Human Development and Education. The project was initiated during the 1996-97 academic year in some of the lowest performing schools in the District of Columbia.

CFL provides an implementation delivery framework designed to assist schools in implementing a comprehensive approach to school reform that is systemic and sustainable in achieving student success. Program implementation focuses on uniting the expertise and resources of the school, family, and community to ensure a high standard of achievement for each student. A high degree of program implementation of CFL is expected to strengthen the capacity of schools to mobilize and redeploy school and community resources to support a comprehensive, coordinated, inclusive approach to achieving student success.

The CFL Demonstration Schools

Five elementary schools began implementation of CFL during the 1996-97 school year. The five schools were identified by the DC Schools as among the lowest performing schools in the District and had shown a continuous pattern of decline in student achievement. The schools were mandated by the school district to participate in the implementation of a comprehensive school reform model—the Community for Learning program.

All five Year 1 schools continued their implementation for a second year during the 1997-98 school year, and another school was added to the CFL network of demonstration schools at that time. This school was also one of the low-performing schools identified by the school district for "special intervention".

Findings on Program Implementation and Outcomes

As is typical of most, if not all, schools in large urban school districts, the six demonstration schools experienced a large teacher and student turnover rate during Year 2 implementation of CFL, as well as changes in their administrative staff. These changes resulted in the need for intensive implementation training and professional development support, in spite of the fact that five of the six demonstration schools were entering their second year of program implementation.

Findings on program implementation and outcomes for the 1997-98 academic year are summarized below under four headings: (a) degree of implementation of the instructional component; (b) patterns of changes in classroom processes; (c) relationship between degree of program implementation and classroom process; and (d) student achievement.

Degree of Program Implementation

Because of school-specific variations (e.g., the percentage of new teachers and new principals, organizational structure, student turnover rate, and other site-specific factors), the implementation progress varies across the CFL demonstration schools. Overall, across the six CFL demonstration schools, the degree of implementation data indicate a pattern of improvement in the degree of implementation across all demonstration schools.

The CFL Degree of Program Implementation Assessment Battery was used to collect information on the extent to which the 12 critical dimensions of the instructional component of CFL (known as the Adaptive Learning Environments Model, [ALEM]) were implemented in each class in all six demonstration schools. These dimensions include interactive teaching, developing student self-responsibility, record keeping, instructing, and motivating. Findings showed that the fall and spring changes were statistically significant for 11 of the 12 dimensions.

Patterns of Changes in Classroom Processes

One of the expected improvements in the degree of implementation of CFL is a concomitant pattern of change in classroom processes. For the six CFL demonstration schools, classroom observations were conducted in all six demonstration schools during fall and spring to obtain information on teacher and student classroom behaviors and to examine the pattern of classroom process changes resulting from program implementation.

In general, findings suggest an overall pattern of positive changes in student behaviors between fall and spring, including class time spent with teachers on instructional

versus managerial interactions, with peers in sharing ideas versus causing disruption, interacting versus doing seat work, and watching and listening. Results of teacher observations between fall and spring were consistent with the student observation findings. Changes were observed between fall and spring in terms of teachers spending more time instructing rather than managing students, and increasing the amount of time spent conducting small-group lessons and working with individual students.

Relationship Between Degree of Program Implementation and Classroom Process

To determine the extent to which the positive changes in the patterns of classroom processes and behaviors can be attributed to changes in the degree of program implementation, a multiple correlation analysis was carried out. Using the results from the classroom observation study carried out for the pre- and postimplementation periods and the degree of implementation measures, the degree of implementation was found to be significantly correlated with classroom process and student behaviors ($p<.05$).

The incremental increase in the degree of implementation and concomitant changes in classroom behaviors and the instructional/learning process are significant in two ways. First, these findings validate the CFL program design in terms of its feasibility and positive impact on the classroom process and how teaching and learning take place in CFL classrooms. Second, and perhaps more importantly, these findings provide reassurance to school staff that their efforts in achieving a high degree of program implementation result in observable, positive changes in their classrooms.

Student Achievement

For the 1997-98 academic year, the superintendent of the DC Schools stipulated that all of the schools must show at least 10% gain between fall and spring testing as measured by the Stanford Achievement Test, 9th Edition (Stanford 9) for both reading and math. All of the six CFL demonstration schools exceeded this improvement standard. This finding is particularly noteworthy in light of the fact that, despite beginning the 1997-98 academic year with lower scores when compared with the other targeted assistance schools, the CFL demonstration schools made equal gains in reading, and a slightly lower gain in math.

Although the schools varied in the amount of progress made, there was a pattern of positive progress in math achievement across all six CFL schools during the 1997-98 academic year. For example, there was a decrease in the percentage of students who scored in the below-basic performance level for the spring testing compared to fall testing, and an increase in the percentage of students who scored in the basic, proficient, and advanced levels.

Another noteworthy finding in the pattern of progress in student achievement in math and reading is the gains made by students who scored at the top 20% across all CFL demonstration schools. By the end of the school year, all students in the top 20% of each school were performing at the basic performance level or higher for both math and reading. In fact, many of these students were performing at the proficient or advanced levels. In addition, the number of students performing at the below-basic level in both reading and math at the beginning of the school year decreased by the end of the school year. At the same time, the number of students performing at the proficient and advanced performance levels in reading and math increased during the 1997-98 school year.

Conclusion

Findings on program implementation and student achievement in the CFL demonstration schools during the 1997-98 school year show a continuing pattern of improvement for a second year. On average, the CFL demonstration schools showed greater achievement gains than other targeted assistance schools, even though the CFL demonstration schools were among the lowest performing schools in the District of Columbia.

Data from the second year of implementation reconfirmed the complexity of implementing a comprehensive approach to school reform in large, urban school systems such as the DC Schools. However, despite the high mobility level of students and the high turnover rate of teachers which are typical of large urban schools, it is particularly encouraging that major progress in program implementation and student outcomes was achieved in every CFL demonstration school.

The ability of the CFL demonstration schools to maintain the initial gains they made during Year 1 of the program, in spite of the turbulent start of Year 2, and the institutional resilience of the school staff who continue to face many challenges in bringing about changes in the learning of children in their schools, are particularly noteworthy. This upward trend in student achievement patterns is highly impressive, particularly in light of the previous pattern of decline prior to CFL implementation.

Development of strategies to encourage students in the CFL demonstration schools to perform at high standards that are comparable to the national and regional norms will continue to be a priority for school and teacher development in DC and other participating CFL schools across the country. ▣

Redefining Success: The San Antonio Case Study

Diana Lam, San Antonio Independent School District

The San Antonio Independent School District has a student population of 61,000. Eighty-five percent of its students are Hispanic, 10% are African American, and 5% are "other." Approximately 92% of its students come from low-income families, 16% have limited English proficiency, and 10% receive special education services.

In 1994, student academic achievement in the district consistently ranked below the state average in all areas of testing. The percentage of students passing the state-mandated Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) was 60.8% in writing, 56.2% in reading, and 34.8% in math. The first time the district's students took the TAAS end-of-course algebra test, only 3% passed compared to the state's 17% average. In biology, 38% passed compared to the state's 84% average.

Also problematic was the district's hierarchical organizational structure, its deeply entrenched practices, and its rigid and narrow job descriptions. Accountability was insufficient as well, and the mechanisms for ensuring it were either lacking or unclear. The district espoused the rhetoric of wanting more parental involvement, but was only minimally receptive of parents who wanted to become involved. The opportunities for employees to engage in personal and professional growth were limited.

In the last 4 years, the San Antonio Independent School District has made modest increases in student achievement in reading and writing and significant gains in mathematics. In reading, the percentage of student passing the TAAS test has increased by 15.5% to 71.7%. In writing, the gain is 14.9%, with 75.7% of the district's students now passing this component of the test. The district's greatest gains were in mathematics, with a 30.6% gain since 1994. Sixty-five percent of the district's students now pass the TAAS math test. This article explores how the school district engaged in systemwide change to achieve academic excellence and sustained student learning.

Increasing Student Achievement

A new organizational structure focusing on instruction and the needs of students was put into place in the summer of 1995. The district is now divided into four learning communities, each headed by an Instructional Steward, who is responsible for the instructional and professional development needs of 20-25 schools. Another change was the creation of a new position at each school—the Instructional Guide. This individual supports the principal in providing meaningful instructional leadership by linking research findings to professional development and classroom practices and providing coaching and technical assistance to teachers.

The district's middle schools were the first priority for change, as examination had revealed numerous inconsistencies in curriculum both between and within schools. At present, the middle schools are beginning the third year of the process, which involves establishing and aligning standards with national and state accountability measures. The high schools are entering their second year of this process, and the elementary schools are just beginning.

Other District Initiatives

Bilingual education. Instead of being scattered over a multitude of classes, the district's bilingual students are now clustered in a program that builds a strong foundation in Spanish and helps students learn English. All bilingual students in the district are expected to be readers and writers in their native language as well as in English. In addition, bilingual students will take the TAAS test in Spanish, and their scores will be included in the state accountability system for the first time this year.

Magnet schools. In 1995, the district began implementation of nine magnet school programs, which are open to district students and students from surrounding districts. The magnet programs include Communication Technologies; Fine Arts; Health Professions; International Banking and Business; Law and Research; Science, Engineering, and Technology; Media Productions; Multilingual Studies; and International Baccalaureate.

High school redesign. The staff of each high school, along with parents and community members, have been exploring, planning, and designing schools where all students are successful and will graduate. Schools were assured that there was not a single way to redesign a school, but that their plan had to address four different parameters: the formation of small, caring teaching and learning environments; academic rigor and high standards for all students; an infrastructure of support for student success; and curriculum alignment. Each high school has access to a district-appointed facilitator, funds for study materials, and summer stipends for redesign teams. The district's goal is to open the 1999-2000 school year with all of its high schools reorganized.

Targeted Assistance. Schools designated as "low-performing" according to state accountability standards are targeted for intervention by the district. Targeted

assistance is also provided to "priority" schools, where less than 50% of students pass any subject at two or more grade levels. Each targeted school receives support for data analysis and development of a plan of action.

Content-specific Emphasis

The district has implemented a balanced literacy approach, a curriculum framework that gives reading and writing equal status. This framework combines explicit instruction in skills and content, balanced with skills taught in the contexts of a variety of reading experiences. A literacy center has been created in one of the district's schools, and more are planned for the future. The center provides on-site demonstration of research-based literacy practices, offers mentorship and classroom support for reading teachers, builds model literacy-based classrooms throughout the school, and serves as a laboratory for collection of data to assess the effects of specific reading practices on student achievement.

Building an Infrastructure

The term "infrastructure" is used here broadly to include anything that facilitates the professional development of teachers and others. The number of professional development days has been increased from 2 to 8 over the past 4 years. Teachers have 3 additional non-teaching days, to be used as workdays. Scheduling is done creatively to provide teams of teachers with common planning time. In addition, the district has shifted its thinking about professional development from the narrow view of "sitting and getting" workshops to a broader understanding that includes all those activities that teachers and others engage in to improve teaching and learning. The development of a wide-area technology network that links all its schools to each other, to the central administrative offices, and to the Internet, provides staff with a wide range of possibilities for sharing with colleagues and exploring other avenues for professional growth.

Through the district's Teachers and Teaching Initiative and the Teacher Incentive Program, school staff have further opportunities to grow professionally and personally. They can participate in several different activities, including working toward certification by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards; mentoring of new teachers; participating in a professional development residency with a designated master teacher; taking sabbaticals; or participating in teacher networks, focus groups, or incentive programs. In addition, the district has implemented required technology competencies, to be effective in 3 years when computers are uniformly accessible.

Strengthening Parent and Community Involvement

The district's Parent and Community Partnership Network, initiated in 1995, has fostered the expansion of parent and community participation through mentoring and partnership programs, increased offerings in community and adult education, and parent and community membership in the schools' instructional leadership teams. Current projects include a parent academy; a parent-community help line; home-based parent education services; the migrant education federally funded Even Start project; conflict resolution and mediation training, an integrated social services program (Project Milano); and the Seamless Support for Academic Success program, financed by the Ford Foundation.

Conclusion

The stakeholders of the district have learned a number of lessons about the realities of what works when engaging in systemic school reform. Here are a few examples:

- Always put children first, above personal interest.
- Vision building is a continuous process.
- Data is our best friend.
- The old basics are not enough; we also need to deal with the new basics.
- District leadership must support and drive the implementation of the reform efforts.
- Capacity building is multi-faceted and continuous.
- Change that is linear—that is, small and limited will—not work.
- Spending more dollars on doing the same thing does not work.
- Connect the reform efforts to the vision and the mission of the school district.
- Integrate the reform efforts into systemic plan of the school district to improve performance.
- Link comprehensive reform to all school improvement efforts.
- Create a supportive operating environment.
- Create dynamic interactions among all people in the district.
- Balance accountability and support.

In stressing the academic, personal, and service dimensions of learning, the district's vision encompasses the whole child. The zeal and commitment of all is needed to do whatever it takes for each child to achieve academic success. The San Antonio Independent School District promotes a culture of revision where change, growth, and risk-taking in the service of children is welcomed, appreciated, and encouraged. ■

Understanding Market-Based School Reform

Herbert J. Walberg, University of Illinois at Chicago and Joseph L. Bast, The Heartland Institute

The sudden emergence of well-organized and often well-funded advocates of market-based school reform caught many long-time participants in the school reform debate off guard. The most dramatic change in the national debate over school reform in the U.S. has been the rise in influence and sophistication of market-based reforms. Pilot voucher programs are operating in Milwaukee and Cleveland, and proposals for statewide voucher plans were introduced in over 20 states in 1998. Nearly 800 charter schools were approved and 750 were expected to be operating in 1997, triple the number of 2 years earlier. Approximately 200,000 students were expected to be enrolled. In addition, significant tuition tax credit legislation was enacted into law in Arizona and Minnesota in 1997 and narrowly missed adoption in Illinois.

The notion that private-sector initiatives can produce better schools received another boost during the past decade from the private scholarship movement, a loosely organized national effort to test the voucher idea through privately funded tuition scholarships to benefit school-age children. The number of such programs rose from one in 1991 to 41 in 1998. These programs can be distinguished from other private scholarship efforts by the random selection of recipients and other devices that allow social scientists to isolate and study the effects of choice on student achievement.

Politically, the profile of free-market reform ideas has risen concomitantly with Republican advances in federal and state government. Opinion polls show rising public support of vouchers as well, with nearly 70% approval among African Americans. Voucher proponents also have won major victories in both federal and state courts since 1996.

The resources and sophistication of the organizations devoted to studying, popularizing, and advocating market-based school reform have grown considerably in the past 10 years. Public interest law organizations are helping to draft and successfully defend tuition tax credit and voucher bills; national think tanks have published books and policy studies on the subject; and state-based think tanks in some 35 states play a leading role in formulating school reform legislation and reform coalitions. New foundations promise to provide additional funding to think tanks and other organizations that explore or promote market-based school reform. The following brief overview introduces non-economists to those aspects of economic methodology that are most often misunderstood or misrepresented by opponents of market-based reform.

What Economics Can Tell Us About Education

Economics is the science of how a particular society solves the problem of allocating scarce resources to fulfill competing needs. Delivery of education, or schooling, in the U.S. clearly fits the description of an economic problem. Most of the known resources that make schooling possible are scarce: teachers, administrators, books, other learning aids, and facilities all must be purchased, which means bidding them away from competing uses. The remaining children attend private schools, where policy is more often determined by contract, or are homeschooled, where a parent sets the rules.

Public Choice Theory

Economists accept as given the rules and ends of the institutions they study. The fact that over 80% of schooled children in the U.S. attend government schools, where policy is generally set by voting, does not mean that economics is an inappropriate tool to explain why schools do (or do not) achieve the ends they seek. Economists generally view voting as a possible substitute for contract or price systems in cases where jointness of consumption and nonexcludability of free-riders would otherwise lead to "market failure." Whether voting works better than markets in such cases, or leads to even less efficient "government failures," is often an empirical question.

Economists utilize a model of human behavior, called rational choice theory, that minimizes the number of assumptions allowed to enter into an economic analysis. The model stipulates that human agents will tend to choose rationally among the choices they face. Rational choice theory is silent on whether or not the agents' ends are rational or desirable in any way except that they are voluntarily chosen by the agent over other ends.

When economics is applied to social and political institutions, it produces propositions and predilections that can be validated by empirical research. This growing body of thought and evidence is called public choice theory. Some of the phenomena documented by public choice theory include log rolling (strategic voting), the "capture" of regulators by those they are supposed to regulate, and the organizational advantages of small interest groups over the much larger, but less-interested general public.

Public choice theory has also

produced many testable propositions concerning education, including the illustrative list below:

1. *In school systems where there are no consequences for either success or failure, higher spending will not produce better results.* Repeated study by independent researchers has found little or no positive correlation between higher spending on government schools and student achievement.
2. *As the source of a school's funding shifts farther away from those who benefit from the school, the school's cost-effectiveness will fall.* Student achievement is closely and positively related to the percentage of funding derived from local sources. Waste and lack of measurable results is greatest for Title 1 programs and Head Start, both programs that rely on federal rather than local funding.
3. *Competing special interest groups will capture the surplus "rent" generated by the government schools' monopoly on tax funding.* Average government teacher salaries and benefits are significantly higher than those of comparable professions. Bureaucracies in government school systems are far larger and more costly than those in private school systems. Public elementary and secondary schools in 1995 employed 2.3 million people who do not teach, compared to approximately 2.5 million teachers. Whereas less than 11% of the private sector workforce was unionized in 1995, over 80% of government school teachers belong to unions.
4. *Because they can be held accountable to their customers, private schools (all other things held constant) should produce larger gains in student achievement per dollar spent as well as report superior results by other measures than their government school counterparts.* Catholic schools in the U.S. spend significantly less per student than government schools, but they dramatically increase educational achievement among minorities in urban areas compared to minorities attending government schools, even after the schools' allegedly tighter admission criteria have been taken into account.
5. *Opposition to cost-cutting and reforms that would provide greater accountability to customers will come primarily from the interest groups benefiting from the government school monopoly.* Teacher unions spent $30 million to defeat Proposition 226 (the "Paycheck Protection Act") in California in 1998 and are expected to spend $4 million attempting to defeat Measure 59, a similar measure on the ballot in Oregon in late-1998. Litigation against tax credits, charter schools, and voucher bills has been initiated and is usually funded by teacher unions. Teacher unions uniformly and adamantly oppose contracting out—even when it could save a school considerable amounts—because it threatens their own job security. The strength of public sector unions has a statistically significant negative effect on the likelihood of U.S. county governments contracting for goods and services.
6. *School Board members are likely to be "captured" by administrators and teacher unions.* Local school boards around the country are thoroughly cowed by teachers unions. Historically, school boards did not resist teacher unionization or collective bargaining. The National Association of School Boards adopts positions that are largely indistinguishable from those of unions, including calling for more funding and opposition to school choice.
7. *Because they are more likely to be held accountable to parents, private schools are more likely to adopt policies popular with parents than are government schools.* Polling reveals that parents and the general public are more likely to agree with private school administrators and teachers than with government school administrators and teachers on issues such as discipline, core curriculum, and the goals of education; polling data reveals that parents of students attending charter schools are more likely to approve of the policies of their chosen school than are parents of students attending government schools.
8. *Programs that require schools to compete for tuition dollars should show improvements in student achievement and in measures of effective organization.* Student achievement is statistically and negatively related to the degree of market concentration in the local school market.

Conclusion

Charter schools, private scholarship programs, tuition tax credits, and pilot voucher programs for low-income students are now operating throughout the U.S. It may be just a matter of time until states opt to allow all parents the choice of a government

(see **Market-Based** on page 24)

Private Vouchers: Politics and Evidence

Terry M. Moe, Stanford University

The voucher movement is one of the most controversial forces for change in American education today. What it proposes—that government provide grants to parents who wish to send their children to private schools—may seem, on the surface, to be simple enough. However, the voucher movement has ignited explosive political battles, as defenders of the public system have put up fierce resistance at every turn. It has also spawned heated intellectual debate, as supporters and opponents have offered conflicting claims about how these reforms would work out in practice.

While the battle over vouchers has been raging, a little-noticed development has been taking place outside the public sector. Individual, corporate, and philanthropic contributors in major American cities have begun setting up their own programs to offer "private vouchers" to the parents of disadvantaged children. As of the 1997-98 school year, 30 of these programs were up and running, involving over 12,000 children; 11 more are scheduled to open in 1998-99.

The private voucher movement is in its early stages, and research on its programs has only just gotten underway. This article examines the empirical evidence that has been generated on the efficacy of private vouchers in an effort to provide a fresh perspective for thinking more generally about the "new politics of education" and where it seems to be taking us.

The Evidence Surrounding Private Vouchers

Reasons for Participating

A common criticism from the opponents of school choice is that parents cannot be counted on to make choices on the basis of sound educational criteria or values. Parents—especially those from low-income backgrounds—supposedly care about practical concerns, such as whether or not the school has a good sports team, and place little emphasis on academic quality and other properties of effective schooling. As a result, they fail not only to make good decisions for their children, but to give schools strong incentives, in competing for parent support, to provide high-quality education.

Until recently, the most suggestive data on parental choice came from the Milwaukee public voucher program. Although the number of private-sector choices is limited there, parents are still allowed to choose between public and private, which is a significant choice. Findings from studies on the Milwaukee program reveal that low-income parents in the voucher program single out academic quality as the most important reason for using the voucher, followed by discipline and the general atmosphere of the school—clear indications that their choices are driven by educational concerns. Voucher parents are also motivated by frustration with the public schools, and are much more dissatisfied with them than parents who remain in the public sector. Yet this motivation, which appears to derive from the same concerns for academics, discipline, and atmosphere, receives somewhat less emphasis.

Private voucher programs ought to provide even better evidence than Milwaukee has been able to generate thus far, because these programs give parents the entire private sector to choose from, and thus greater opportunities to act on their own values. The evidence they yield is strikingly consistent with findings for the public voucher system. Indeed, the results for the two Milwaukee voucher programs, one public and one private, are virtually identical. More generally, parents uniformly indicate that academic quality is their most salient reason for participating. Discipline is typically very highly ranked, as is the school's general atmosphere. And frustration with the public schools, while not the top motivator, is a consistent complaint.

It is of no small weight that the programs being studied here do not target suburbanites, or even average middle-class families, but low-income families—precisely that stratum of society that critics regard as the least capable or responsible. The evidence suggests that, even within this stratum, parents who use vouchers put very substantial emphasis on educational concerns in making their choices about schools.

Parent Satisfaction

What are the impacts of vouchers on children? For most observers, the acid test is whether vouchers lead to higher student achievement, and thus whether voucher children do better on standardized tests than children in public schools do, once other factors are properly controlled. But while learning is a crucial outcome of schooling, it is not the only aspect that contributes to the well-being of children. To get a more broadly based view of how well children are doing, we need to look at a wider range of indicators, and recognize that many of the important aspects of schooling—including those that have to do with how much students learn—are intangible.

In a choice system, the people whose judgments matter most are parents. They may not be experts, but they know what they want for their children, they know what they are looking for in a school, and they

can provide summary judgments of how well schools—and their children—are doing. Parent satisfaction, then, is important evidence: although it is subjective, it is anchored in direct experience, reflects the kinds of judgments on intangibles that are needed to assess important components of schooling, and addresses a fundamental issue that needs answering about any school system: whether it pleases the people it is supposed to be serving.

Data on parent satisfaction offer some of the best evidence available on the impact of vouchers. Studies on the Milwaukee public voucher system have already shown that voucher parents are substantially more satisfied with their new private schools than public school parents are with their public schools. And while the size of the satisfaction gap depends on what aspect of schooling is being evaluated—from learning to discipline to textbooks to opportunities for participation—voucher parents are consistently more satisfied than their public school counterparts, whatever the issue.

The data coming in from the private voucher programs strongly and consistently reinforce these results, and show that private voucher parents are not only considerably more satisfied than public school parents across all issue areas, but are even more satisfied than the parents in the public voucher program. This makes sense, because they have more to choose from than the public-voucher parents do, and have more opportunities to find schools they are happy with.

Thus the people who do choose to participate in voucher programs—a subset of low-income parents—are considerably more satisfied with their new private schools than they were with their original public schools, and they are much more satisfied than other parents who have been in the public schools all along. These are among the strongest findings in the entire literature. In the eyes of parents who have actually used vouchers, the verdict is that vouchers work.

Student Achievement

For almost everyone involved in the national debate over vouchers, the most salient issue is student achievement. Advocates gain credibility for their cause by showing that parents subjectively believe vouchers are working well for them. But what uncommitted people want to see—and what opponents demand—are objective assessments of whether vouchers "really are working" to promote higher levels of student achievement.

Achievement, however, is an issue that is difficult to investigate. Most voucher programs are quite young, and it is risky to try to evaluate the impact of vouchers by studying systems that are still in their early stages. The changes that parental choice sets in motion may take time to be realized. Children have to settle into their new schools and be shaped by their new settings, and schools have to come to terms with their new incentives and have a chance to adjust.

Even if these problems could be dealt with, studying the effects of vouchers on student achievement would still be very difficult. Among other things, for instance, simply getting test scores is a forbidding task. Researchers would need to get the same or comparable test scores for both public and private school students. This is harder than it seems, since private schools may not test their students at all, or use a variety of different tests that may not match those given by the public schools. Public school test scores, meanwhile, are often subject to all sorts of legal restrictions, and may be unavailable to researchers.

Once test scores are obtained, moreover, researchers have to deal with the problem of controlling for other variables —such as family background—that could also play a role in explaining how much students learn, and that may account for why some children show up in voucher programs to begin with. It is hard to carry out research that controls for all the variables we know might be relevant, or even for the important ones.

The data on achievement are complicated, and there is not enough evidence as yet to say with confidence that the students who take advantage of vouchers clearly learn more than the students who don't. Yet there has been real progress in the study of student achievement. And at this stage, the weight of the research—including the most recent work, based on the best data and methods—leads to the tentative conclusion that voucher students do indeed learn more. Additional research on the topic is forthcoming, and whether these early results will hold up over time remains to be seen.

These results have given rise a fundamental point that is little appreciated in the debate over vouchers: design is the key. How vouchers work in practice is critically dependent on the framework of rules in which they are embedded. As private voucher programs expand and multiply, researchers will have increasing opportunities to observe how different designs work out in practice, and, more generally, to explore the range of issues—from student performance to parental participation to information to equity and access—that need to be jointly assessed and fitted together in any coherent treatment of vouchers. This is an exciting prospect, and for the first time promises to generate an extensive body of empirical research to inform the public debate. As it

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Transforming Urban School Systems:
Integrated Governance in Chicago and Birmingham (UK)

Kenneth K. Wong, The University of Chicago

Current reforms in U.S. and U.K. "sister cities" Chicago and Birmingham, England, provide valuable lessons in urban educational transformation for other urban school systems. Recent accomplishments of the two systems must be considered to be significant, as their schools were once publicized as the worst in their respective nations. The two systems also confront numerous structural constraints associated with urban society. This article looks at the educational reform process underway in both cities and at implications for educators and policymakers in both countries.

Since Mayor Richard Daley took over the Chicago Public Schools in July 1995, the district has made significant improvements in its financial management, administrative functions, and educational performance. Major initiatives that once posed political risks, such as an end to "social promotion" and the creation of "summer bridge" programs, are now endorsed by national, state, and local leaders.

Across the Atlantic Ocean, the Birmingham Local Education Authority (LEA) has undergone a transformation. The Birmingham City Council reversed a decade of neglect in education with its appointment of a nationally-known reformer, Professor Tim Brighouse, as the Chief Education Officer in September 1993. Brighouse's charismatic leadership has energized and inspired the rank-and-file in the teaching force. Since 1994, the city's budget for education has consistently exceeded the national spending standard. These investments have produced significant gains in student performance.

The sister systems are closing the gap with their national averages. In Birmingham, significant gains have been made in student test scores in the last 3 years. In 7 out of 10 national tests in key subject areas across four different grade levels, Birmingham students showed improvement at a much faster rate than the national average. In Chicago, elementary reading and math test scores have showed consistent gains over the past several years. Clearly, Chicago and Birmingham are in the midst of an unprecedented drive toward educational improvement.

Integrated Governance as a School Reform Model

The successes of the two systems closely relate to the recent redesign of district-level governance and management. The sister systems share several institutional characteristics that can be broadly described as "integrated governance." The major institutional features include:

- strong political will to improve the operation of the school system
- clear vision of educational accountability, focused on academic standards and performance outcomes
- high-quality leadership at the central office committed to using a mix of intervention and support strategies to meet the challenges faced by urban schools

With integrated governance in place, conditions of teaching and learning in the Chicago public schools have been improved in several ways:

- better financial and management functions
- sharper focus on schools and students with the greatest academic needs
- higher standards in professional recruitment, academic performance, and school management
- enhanced public confidence in the city's educational system

Through integrated governance, the educational system in Birmingham has been transformed in several ways:

- central office as "critical friend"
- wide range of high-quality, affordable technical services
- national leader in setting performance targets and in innovative initiatives
- critical support offered to schools within a national educational system that otherwise lacks sufficient checks and balances

Considering the Cross-national Context

The two sister systems operate in very different policy and political contexts. The United Kingdom has instituted a national examination, a national curriculum, and a national inspectorate on schooling standards, whereas schooling in the U.S. is defined by the constitutional framework of individual states. In addition, local management gives schools in the UK more control over financial and human resources, where such autonomy is lacking in the U.S. Parents in England can select from a broader pool of schools, including state-affiliated (government), religious, and grant-maintained, while parents in the U.S. have more limited options.

On the other hand, the two systems have many demographic similarities. Both are large and urban, and have several hundred schools. Both are racially and ethnically diverse, with relatively large percentages of students

speaking languages other than English. In addition, the percentage of students from low-income families in both cities is higher than the national (for Birmingham) and state (for Chicago) averages.

Systemwide Reform in Chicago

Passage of the School Reform Amendatory Act in 1995 compelled leadership of the Chicago Public Schools to target the city's lowest-performing schools for intervention. In 1996, the district placed 109 of its schools on probation because 15% or fewer of their students scored at grade level on nationally normed tests.

Probation schools are held accountable for improving student performance on standardized tests. The district provides several types of support to facilitate this improvement. Each school must select from a list of board-approved external partners, which include teams of personnel from local universities and national reform groups. The district also provides probation managers to oversee the schools' improvement plans and assist the principal in all areas of school operations, and business managers to oversee financial operations. All of these supports are intended to enable the principal to become an effective instructional leader. Seven schools with a continual record of low performance were "reconstituted." Five of the seven schools had their principals replaced, and 29% of their teachers were not rehired. These schools will have to improve their test scores or risk being shut down.

An Ambitious Agenda

At the end of its third year under integrated governance, the Chicago Public Schools has developed a reform agenda that includes the following new initiatives:

- The system has designed and disseminated its own standards (Chicago Academic Standards) in the areas of English/language arts, mathematics, biological and physical sciences, and social sciences. Benchmark exams for selected cut-off grades were developed and piloted in June 1998.
- All high schools have established Junior Academies for 9th and 10th graders and are moving towards creating Senior Academies for all 11th and 12th graders. The academy structure creates teams of teachers who are responsible for a group of students over the course of their high school careers. Teachers move through the grades with their students.
- Teachers are expected to participate in professional development that is supportive and consistent with their school's action plan.
- Local School Council elections were held on report-card-pickup days in order to improve parental participation.

Transformation in Birmingham Local Education Authority (LEA)

Like its counterpart in Chicago, the political leadership in Birmingham has made a strong commitment to education in recent years. The best indication of the city's political will toward improvements in education was a shift toward educational funding that coincided with the appointment of Tim Brighouse as Chief Education Officer in 1993. The new leadership saw the need to maintain a balance between elaborate construction projects to renew the city's central business district and human capital investment through funding of educational reform.

The Birmingham LEA maintains two essential characteristics of integrated governance—unified political structure that is committed to education, and a vision that aims at better student performance. Overall, a vision of the LEA as a critical friend to teachers lies at the core of the Birmingham model. This vision, in turn, relies on a well-designed infrastructure at the central office focused on bringing about school improvement and academic gains.

First, the Chief Education Officer spends most of his time visiting schools, talking to teachers, and observing classroom instruction. Teachers are constantly reminded of broad principles that guide good practices, such as inclusiveness, celebrating success rather than focusing on failure, and seeing education as a lifelong activity. Second, the educational needs of the schools drive central office organization rather than the other way around. Third, a full-scale infrastructure provides ongoing professional and technical support to schools.

Conclusion

From the examples of these two school systems, several policy challenges emerge. For policymakers, the key is to develop strategies that will sustain and broaden the accomplishments of the last 3 years. For practitioners, there is a need to improve organizational coherence and programmatic alignment between the central administration and the individual school to meet the challenge of educational accountability. For researchers, the challenge is to raise analytical standards in conducting research that is less grounded in advocating a particular ideological or partisan point of view.

In Chicago, the central administration has successfully addressed fiscal and managerial problems. It has raised performance standards for the whole system and instituted an ambitious accountability agenda that provides both pressure and support for school improvement. Several urban school districts in the U.S. are following

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Implications of School Choice Experiments

Paul E. Peterson, Harvard University

Whether viewed in comparison with other countries or looking within the United States over time, the state of American education appears pretty grim. For example, recent studies have shown that students are learning less during their middle-school years than they once were. When test-score growth in the 1990's is compared with growth a generation earlier, their results show that students are slipping in math, science and writing. African-American students are slipping just as much as White students—even more so in reading. Furthermore, studies show that American students are slipping far behind their peers internationally in math and science.

As a result of these problems in American education, many are giving serious consideration to the possibility that school vouchers or some other mechanisms for increasing parental choice provide a way of reversing these educational trends. However, these same people also wonder whether this solution to our educational ailments, however good it may sound in theory, may in practice be worse than the disease.

This article examines the latest evidence surrounding school choice, focusing in particular on the level of satisfaction parents express with the choices they have made; and the effects of school choice on social capital, student learning, and ethnic relations.

Parent Satisfaction with Choice

Many economists think that customer satisfaction is the best measure of school quality. According to this criterion, there is little doubt that school choice is a success. Both anecdotal evidence and more systematic studies confirm that most participating families are highly satisfied with their choice schools. Studies of parental satisfaction in Milwaukee, Indianapolis, and San Antonio, for example, show that choice schools are more popular than public schools. And in a recent survey of choice applicants from public and private schools in Washington, DC, nearly 60% of private school parents gave their school an "A" as compared to less than one-fifth of public school parents.

The larger level of satisfaction with private schools became especially evident when parents were asked about specific aspects of school life. In terms of safety, for example, parents of private school applicants were much more satisfied than public school parents. Two-thirds of the private school parents, in comparison to only a quarter of the public school parents, were "very satisfied" with school safety. Nearly two-thirds of the private school parents, but less than one-fifth of the public school parents, were "very satisfied" with their school's academic program. In fact, on almost every other item in the questionnaire—teacher skills, parent involvement, class size, school facility, respect for teachers, and teacher and parent relations—differences in satisfaction levels were large.

Effects on Social Capital

In a well-known study of public and private schools, James Coleman and his colleagues developed the concept of "social capital" to refer to the resources that are generated by the more or less accidental interaction among adults in a well-functioning community. Recently, there has been a serious decline in the nation's social capital. People participate less in community activities, group sports, and neighborhood picnics, resulting in a growing distrust of one another and a decline in the effectiveness of those governmental services dependent upon the mutual cooperation of citizens. Inasmuch as schools and families must work closely together if children are to achieve learning success, these findings raise particularly serious implications for the state of American education.

Not much is known about the potential of public and private schooling for the formation of social capital. Nor is it altogether clear whether social capital is generated more by private or public institutions. On the one hand, it is possible that neighborhood public schools stimulate conversations among parents who meet one another both at local school events, community meetings held in local school buildings, and in the course of daily shopping and neighborhood walks. Private schools that serve different groups within a community may fragment and isolate citizens from one another.

All these considerations suggest that community engagement occurs more regularly among those who send their children to the same public school as their neighbors. And perhaps that was once the case in small-towns where public schools were both educational organizations and institutions of community integration. But any such claims for public schools located in large cities have a quaint, romantic tinge. Many factors in today's big cities undermine the public schools' capacity to generate social capital, and potential violence, regulatory constraints, and contractual obligations may restrict community discourse and the formation of social capita in publicly controlled settings.

Meanwhile, the private sector

would seem to have some very specific advantages. The very fact that parents are choosing their child's school provides an incentive to search out other parents to learn more about what is happening in alternative educational settings. And parents of private school students are given many opportunities to contact one another. For example, it is easier for private schools to distribute lists of phone numbers and addresses, making it easier for parents to contact one another to enlist each other's participation in candy sales, newspaper drives or school auctions. Furthermore, private schools cannot afford the elaborate bus services that transport public school children. As a result, private school families may need to talk to one another in order to arrange ride sharing or work out safe, shared public transportation routes. Private school families may also meet each other at religious services, bingo parties, and evening school events, more easily scheduled in private schools less burdened by union contracts. All of these situations provide parents with opportunities to talk with one another as well as with school employees.

Student Learning in Choice Schools

Although large-scale studies have shown that students learn more in private high schools, choice critics continue to attack studies for not adequately correcting for "selection effects." While some researchers have anticipated this argument by taking into account family characteristics such as education and income, critics argue that no amount of statistical tinkering can ever fully correct for the selection effect: Families who pay to send their child to private school are almost certainly more involved in and concerned about their child's education, even after adjusting for demographic characteristics.

Current school choice experiments are providing researchers with new opportunities to circumvent this selection problem. For one, they are limited to inner-city children from low-income families. More importantly, to ensure fairness, scholarship winners are sometimes chosen by lottery, giving these programs the potential of becoming a classic randomized experiment of the kind found in the best medical research.

Unfortunately, most school choice experiments conducted thus far have not conformed to a classic randomized experiment. Privately funded programs in Indianapolis, San Antonio, and Milwaukee all admitted students on a first-come, first-serve basis. Such admission procedures have a fairness of their own, and they are easy to administer. It is also the case that test score results from these experiments are mainly positive. For example, the scores of students participating in the school choice program in San Antonio increased between 1991-92 and 1993-94, while those of the public school comparison group fell.

Only in Milwaukee are data available from a randomized experiment. Enrollment in the program was found to have only limited positive effects during the first two years a student was in the program. But choice students made larger gains in years three and four, as much as one quarter of a standard deviation in reading and one third of a standard deviation in mathematics.

That the improved performance does not become substantial until the third and fourth years is quite consistent with a common-sense understanding of the educational process. Choice schools are not magic bullets that transform children overnight. It takes time to adjust to a new teaching and learning environment. The disruption of switching schools and adjusting to new routines and expectations may hinder improvement in test scores in the first year or two of being in a choice school. Educational benefits accumulate and multiply with the passage of time.

The study in question has many technical limitations, but even if its findings are corroborated by future research, they raise a new set of questions: Why do Milwaukee choice schools, with more limited resources, have smaller class sizes than public schools? Are private schools better able to find efficient ways of using limited resources? Do they provide more effective education by concentrating resources on smaller class sizes rather than paying higher teacher salaries or hiring more administrators? These are questions well worth exploring in future studies.

We also need to conduct more carefully designed randomized experiments of school choice. The data from the randomized experiment in Milwaukee are the best available, but they are still not definitive. The number of participating schools was small, and valuable data is missing. Higher quality information may emerge from evaluations of experiments now beginning in New York City, Dayton, and Washington, DC. The 1,200 students participating in the New York program were chosen by lottery from the large pool of over 20,000 applicants, from which a control group is being selected. Similar lotteries were held in the Spring of 1998 in Dayton and Washington. It remains to be seen whether the pay-off from private schooling in these cities is as great as some anticipate.

Ethnic Relations and Political Tolerance

The purpose of education is to teach more than reading, writing, and arithmetic; it is also to prepare

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Education
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Many choice schools to which scholarship students may go are oversubscribed because parents believe they emphasize academic content and discipline. Contrary to common beliefs, the private schools to which scholarship students go are more racially integrated than public schools; their students have more positive inter-racial experiences in them, and they more often endorse and engage in voluntary community causes. Through increased competition, moreover, the presence of choice schools appears to increase the effectiveness, cost efficiency, and responsiveness of nearby public schools.

Best Practices

Experiences in several cities and discussions at the conference suggested a number of "best practices" that appear promising in increasing students' achievement. Many conferees, both those favoring best practices and those preferring parental choice, would agree with advisability of a core set of best practices including the following:

- Basing planning on research
- Aligning curriculum, teaching, and testing to goals
- Decentralizing operational authority to the school level
- Employing information systems to monitor progress
- Holding schools accountable for meeting standards
- Providing alternatives in cases of failure

Consensual Conclusions

Although conferees with divergent views were not expected to achieve consensus, it seems reasonable to say that most would agree to several general conclusions drawn from the deliberations:

A. Even though some bright prospects can be cited, U.S. school systems, especially those in cities, are not performing well; they have not improved substantially since "A Nation at Risk" was published about 15 years ago. There was a consensual sense of urgency for advancing the current momentum to achieve reform success.
B. The continuing lack in progress has induced ever bolder reform strategies—increased parental choice, decentralized governance from states and districts to schools and parents; high standards which many students may not attain in the short run; focussing on core curricula and examinations; and specific accountability and incentives for educators to do better.
C. Recent research and experience suggest that some of these changes are promising if not proven; they require further large-scale trials and careful, rigorous, and independent evaluation and research.

Recommendations

Those convinced by the evidence on parental choice recommended that it be further expanded and evaluated. Some recommended that substantially expanding the number of roughly 1300 charter schools in 35 states would suffice to accommodate parental preferences. Others believed that private and public vouchers demonstrate that freeing decision making from state and local boards is necessary to accommodate parental preferences. Those preferring choice observed that the poor and minority students in cities may benefit most from choice, but, in principle, choice should be extended to all students.

The conference papers and discussion groups suggested a number of specific best practices that appear promising in raising student achievement. These include the following:

A. Decentralize state and district control. A state or district board can set achievement goals, allocate funds, and measure progress but delegate operational responsibilities to subordinate units within their purview while holding them accountable for results.
B. Raise standards, measure results, and provide incentives. State and local boards, for example, may require students to pass examinations to drop out of or graduate from high school. They may heavily regulate, replace the staff, or close failing schools. Staff that raise achievement or otherwise perform meritoriously can be financially and otherwise rewarded. Students who pass Advanced Placement examinations can graduate from high school and college earlier, which saves time and tax funds. The award of federal funds for categorical programs may be made contingent on accomplishment of results. Funds for unproven programs, practices, and policies may be reallocated to those proven effective and efficient.
C. Emphasize a solid academic core curriculum, set standards for teaching practices and student participation and effort including:
   - Agree upon standards of attainment.
   - Implement effective teaching practices, testing policies and curriculum to ensure attainment of the standards.
   - Gather baseline and trend data on achievement and other outcomes of schools to measure progress over time.

D. Engage universities, regional educational laboratories, and other research and development and technical assistance provider organizations to assist states, districts, and schools in implementing research-based innovations that work, particularly by providing instruments and procedures to measure implementation, classroom practices, achievement results, and parent views.

E. Forge partnerships and joint programs among the national and local professional education associations.

F. Establish coordination and collaborative partnerships among schools, social service, and health service organizations that are focused on educational improvement and student learning.

G. Recruit teachers with broad knowledge of the liberal arts and sciences and a deep mastery of their teaching field; review and revise programs for the preparation of teachers and administrators; employ alternative certification programs to attract better teachers.

H. Extend learning time through homework, after-school programs, and summer school; provide special services for students who do not meet new rigorous standards.

I. Provide parents and the public with credible and reliable evidence upon which they can base decisions about their children's education.
   - Establish mechanisms or forums in which parents can voice their criticism of present systems of education.
   - Issue a "consumer guide" to school reform models based upon independent assessment of the features and results.
   - Use public opinion data to measure the satisfaction of parents and the public with their schools.

J. Investigate and experiment further with the apparently positive outcome effects of smaller schools and smaller school districts.

What Might Work?

The evidence from the two distinct lines of research on reform strategies identified at the conference, parental choice and best practices, is less than definitive, and the discussion around them on what works and what doesn't remains divided. Yet, in view of the continuing achievement crisis, especially in big cities, substantial changes seem required. Well-designed, careful trials and evaluation of alternative policies, as in medicine, seem the best course. Federal, state, and local policies might be usefully combined into what seems to work from the two reform strategies to make provisions for parental choice and resulting competition among providers to foster best practices.

For example, a coordinated system of delivery might be established for categorical programs such as Title 1, special education, and bilingual education. States in turn might require potential recipients to submit research-based arguments for practices they would employ and to submit annual evidence for the attainment of achievement outcomes.

Public schools including charter schools and private schools could compete for grants proportional to the number of students attracted to their programs. Most students in such categorical programs could receive the full benefit of their regular school. The categorical grants, however, would give them additional specialized services after school, on Saturdays, and during summers at the same or another public or private school.

To restore the American tradition of local school control, the principle of combining choice and best practices might also be extended to states and local districts. They could, for example, set forth clear achievement standards. As long as schools meet these standards, they would remain free of operational regulation. If, on the other hand, a school failed to attain standards or make acceptable progress, best practices could be externally encouraged or imposed.

Visiting teams of successful educators might assist in suggesting best practices and evaluating progress. Schools that continued to fail might be reconstituted with new leaders and staff. Alternatively, they might be closed, in which case their students would be given scholarships to attend nearby public and private schools. There are, of course, many variations on the design and details of such systems that are best left to states and local districts. ■

School Variation

(continued from page 3)

district's assignment of principals, and they see themselves as having skills and aptitudes that are tailored to their settings.

4. The principals perceive that they participate in a vertically integrated structure of values and learning opportunities that are designed to create a common culture.

5. The principals see themselves as among the key purveyors of an increasingly explicit and widespread "technical culture" around instructional improvement that has a distinct set of norms, a professional language, and a set of practices.

6. The principals endorse, for the most part, the application of

high standards across all schools and the view that school staffs should be held accountable for attaining them.

7. The principals report substantial variation in their relationships with the teachers' union representative, but do not use union relations as an excuse or explanation for their own performance.

Conclusion

Given this generally positive picture, we are left with several questions about the broader issues of systemic improvement and school variability that may be helpful to other districts as they go through the process of systemic improvement:

1. How should we think about "good" and "bad" variations among schools in the context of systemic improvement?
2. What are the most effective ways to teach system-level and school-level administrators the skills of tailoring, bilateral negotiation, and norm-setting that are at the core of reconciling systemic improvement with school variability?
3. What role should student performance standards play in an overall strategy of instructional improvement?
4. What are the future resource implications of the increasing demands of instructional improvement on school- and district-level personnel? ■

New York State
(continued from page 7)

increasing graduation requirements was a mistake? No. Focusing solely on graduation rates mistakes symbol for substance. It is the competencies developed in high school that enable a student to survive and thrive in college, not the diploma. Higher standards will result in all students learning more on average. Those who graduate will be more competent and will be able to command a better wage in the labor market. The average high school drop-out will also be more competent. This, too, will result in higher pay and higher rates of college attendance. There will be losers—the hypothesized 2 to 4% of the age cohort that would have graduated under the old standards but do not under the new higher standards regime. But these losses pale by comparison to the wage rate gains experienced by the 96 to 98% of young people whose completed years of schooling are not changed by the higher standards. ■

Market-Based
(continued from page 15)

or private school for their children. It is the authors' hope that the conceptual framework provided in this article will help educators and other stakeholders to avoid some of the common misconceptions about market-based school reform. ■

Private Vouchers
(continued from page 17)

does, it may well change that debate dramatically, along with the path of American education reform.

Conclusion

On the whole, what researchers have to tell us about vouchers is positive and encouraging. The evidence suggests that there is indeed a genuine demand for vouchers among low-income families, who respond enthusiastically and in large numbers when given the opportunity to participate in these programs. Free to choose, they distribute themselves across a wide variety of private schools; and these schools, contrary to the prevailing myth about private-sector elitism, appear only too happy to take them in. When poor children have vouchers, they have access, and there is good reason to believe that their educational opportunities are expanded considerably.

Experience from private voucher programs also casts doubt on the myth of parental incompetence. The evidence suggests that participating parents make good choices for their children, or at least make a serious effort to do so; for they appear to be guided by precisely the sorts of educational criteria that concerned parents ought to be guided by—academic quality, discipline, and other indicators of effective schooling. To the extent this is so, moreover, they are probably transmitting the right kinds of incentives to participating schools, which are put on notice that they need to do their jobs well if they are to attract parent support.

The evidence also tends to suggest—at least so far—that vouchers work. Data on parent satisfaction indicates that, on a variety of different dimensions, voucher parents are highly satisfied with the schools they have chosen, think the shift from public to private has been a beneficial one, and evaluate their schools more highly than public school parents do. These are important measures of how well students and schools are doing. In the eyes of the people who use them, vouchers seem to be working well. However, we cannot lose sight of the fact that the private voucher movement is a far more important social phenomenon than a focus on evidence and research alone can suggest. It is a movement that opens new educational opportunities to thousands of disadvantaged children, and promotes innovation and change by loosening the iron grip of established interests. It adds fire and momentum to the larger movement for school choice. But above all, it embodies and advances a new politics of education—a politics that stands traditional alliances on their heads, and promises to transform the

constellation of pressures that shape our nation's educational policies and practices. ■

Integrated Governance
(continued from page 19)

Chicago's lead, including Cleveland.

The Birmingham LEA has experienced similar success under integrated governance. The LEA has significantly improved its fiscal operations and has mobilized teachers around its innovative educational agenda. Its professionally oriented support model has led to significant school improvement and played a crucial role in improving student achievement. As the national government in the UK reinforces the LEA's monitoring function, Birmingham offers a promising model by which to balance pressure and support.

While the sister systems have made significant gains, their approaches to school improvement reflect both differences in vision, leadership, organizational structure, and local political realities. As the educational visions of both administrations continue to evolve and as the political and organizational realities change, continued study of how integrated governance operates within each system may provide further insights into successful strategies for improving urban schools. ■

Choice Experiments
(continued from page 20)

citizens for their participation in a democratic society. School choice critics argue that school choice will provoke the formation of schools specializing in witchcraft, Black nationalism, and right-wing political thought. The deep-rooted, underlying belief is that only schools operated by a government agency can preserve democracy.

But despite scare tactics and rhetorical flourishes, choice critics have failed to offer much evidence that school choice will balkanize America. No reasonable person can believe the American public would routinely turn over school dollars to extremist groups any more than it would allow airlines to fly unregulated or meat to be marketed without inspection. Only the most extreme libertarians think school choice should mean completely unregulated choice.

In fact, students in private schools today are less racially isolated than their public school peers. One recent study has shown that 37% of private school students are in classrooms whose share of minority students is close to the national average, as compared with only 18% of public school students. Not only are private school students more likely to be in well-integrated classrooms, but they are less likely to be in extremely segregated ones. Forty-one percent of the private school students are in highly segregated classrooms, as compared to 55% of their public school peers.

Private school students also report more positive relationships with students from other racial and ethnic groups. They are significantly more likely to have cross-racial friendships than are students at public schools. And students, teachers, and administrators at private schools all report fewer racial problems.

Private school students are also more community-spirited. Students at private schools are more likely than public school students to think that it is important to help others and volunteer for community causes. They also are more likely to report that they in fact did volunteer in the past two years and to say their school expected them to do so.

Conclusion

School choice is not a panacea that can resolve all of society's problems. But critics and supporters alike can surely agree that it is time to rethink the way we organize our public educational system. Such rethinking already seems to be taking place. Now it is up to expanded research and practical experimentation to determine its efficacy. ■

The CEIC
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Improving Results for Children and Families by Connecting Collaborative Services with School Reform Efforts

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Communities across the country are engaged in collaborative efforts to help young people learn and develop important skills and competencies they need to succeed now and throughout life. Many of the efforts are centered around schools. Linking the reform of community services to schools stands to benefit young people in several ways. By offering a wide variety of school-linked services and supports to children and their families, communities help overcome nonacademic barriers to learning. Services and supports offered at or near schools can also provide new avenues for parent participation in children's learning and in the life of the school.

The majority of schools in these communities are also working to improve the quality of teaching and learning that goes on in schools in order to assure that all students meet more challenging academic standards. A handful of sites are leveraging these partnerships in ways that assist and inform education improvement efforts. If school-linked service efforts are to realize their full potential to help improve education success for all students, then policymakers, administrators, service providers, and parents need to learn from these pioneering efforts. What strategies are being used to generate a community-wide commitment to high standards, high expectations, and success for all students? What role are families and other community representatives playing in helping school administrators and teachers connect teaching and learning to real-world concerns? How are partnerships with community organizations and other service agencies helping schools form close-knit and caring relationships with students and their families? How are schools that are undertaking serious and sustainable school reform finding the time and resources to also play a role in assuring that families have access to social and health services and other more informal supports? How are states encouraging and supporting such collaborative efforts? It is in the context of understanding these and related questions that this issue of *The CEIC Review* was initiated.

The articles included in this issue were commissioned for a National Invitational Conference report on Improving Results for Children and Families by Connecting Collaborative Services with School Reform Efforts, sponsored by Temple University Center for Research in Human Development and Education (CRHDE) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). The articles were written by education leaders and scholars to help develop a deeper understanding of strategies states and communities can use to harness their collaborative partnerships in ways that can reinforce and support education improvement efforts and the policies that support those efforts. The conference had the goals of:

- learning how sites around the country are improving academic achievement by integrating school improvement efforts with community services reform;

(cont'd.)

The National Center on Education in the Inner Cities is a unit in the Temple University Center for Research in Human Development and Education, an interdisciplinary center devoted to fostering healthy developmental and educational success of children and families in this nation's urban communities. Inquiries about the work of the Center should be sent to Information Services, CRHDE, Temple University, 1301 Cecil B. Moore Avenue, Philadelphia, PA Copyright © 1999 19122-6091.

- examining how education and other human service policy is enabling and/or hindering these efforts; and
- providing an opportunity for selected experts on collaborative services and school reform – as well as state and local agency personnel, school and community-based staff, and parents and family advocates – to reconceptualize the challenge of forming school-community partnerships that result in improved academic success for all students.

The conference explored expert, practitioner, and community-based knowledge and perceptions about the factors facilitating or inhibiting successful multi-level partnerships to improve education and other important results for children and families by connecting collaborative services with education reform efforts. Conference participants included selected experts on collaborative services and school reform, state and local agency personnel, school- and community-based staff, and parents and family advocates. Participants discussed and exchanged information on: (a) contextual factors that influence the ability of schools to link education reform strategies with collaborative efforts to improve the services and supports available to children and families; (b) the impact these efforts have on educational and other important results for children and families; and (c) action steps that state and local policy-makers, practitioners, and parents can take to make sure school-community collaborative efforts are producing desired results.

The chapters included in this book were commissioned specially to serve as background material for a national invitational conference sponsored by the Laboratory for Student Success (LSS) and the National Center on Education in the Inner Cities (CEIC) at the Temple University Center for Research in Human Development and Education (CRHDE), in collaboration with the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). The conference was held on January 28-29 in Washington, DC. The opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect the position of the supporting agencies and no official endorsement should be inferred. ⌘

Trends and Lessons in School-Community Initiatives

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The idea of the school as the heart of the community and a gathering place for people of all ages to learn, spend time together, and discuss concerns is as old as the one-room schoolhouse and as familiar as the village green. Over the last decade, a rapid and highly diverse groundswell of new school-community initiatives has joined and shaped these earlier efforts. Schools and communities – in partnership with young people and their families – are working more closely than ever before to help students, despite increasingly complex social and economic pressures. But up until recently not enough has been done to learn what these expanding efforts have to teach about making schools a community focal point. Encouraged by community and school leaders, practitioners, policymakers, and funders, the School-Community Mapping Project was formed to capture these lessons. This project, with funding from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, is a joint effort of the Institute for Educational Leadership and the National Center for Community Education, in partnership with the Center for Youth Development and Policy Research, and the Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago.

What we learned draws on the experiences of a cross-section of 20 well-regarded school-community initiatives. Through surveys, interviews, and group conversations we hoped to: identify the major types, purposes, and strategies of school-community initiatives; explore the dynamics of implementing, sustaining, and expanding these initiatives across several key dimensions; encourage networks among new and existing initiatives; and recommend ways in which practitioners, policy-makers, and funders can strengthen and sustain the field as a whole.

We started our research by defining school-community initiatives as simply as possible: as "intentional efforts to create and sustain relation-ships among a K-12 school or school district and a variety of both formal and informal organizations and institutions in the community." These school-linked efforts have their roots in four broader reform and advocacy approaches:

- improved educational quality and academic outcomes for young people (School Reform);
- more efficient and effective health and social service delivery to meet the comprehensive needs of children and families (Services Reform);
- increased recognition of the developmental needs of young

people and the importance of building on their strengths (Youth Development); and

- expanded efforts to strengthen the human, social, and economic underpinnings of neighborhoods and communities (Community Development).

The largest percentages of the school-community initiatives we looked at cited services reform and youth development as their primary purposes, followed by school reform and community development. While most school-community initiatives are aligned more with one reform approach than another, a primary finding of the study is that most initiatives claimed their purposes and strategies have been influenced by *all* of them. Many are working to incorporate new elements without losing site of their original purpose.

What We've Learned and What Needs to Be Done

In our study, we zeroed in on nine key aspects of school-community initiatives which are most often asked about. Following are a few of our findings.

Initiation. Public sector leadership of large scale, often statewide strategies has helped move the concept of school-community initiatives well into the mainstream. The nonprofit private sector has introduced a steady infusion of new ideas and increased broad-based acceptance by preventing these initiatives from being written off as "just another government program." Increased and continued involvement of *both* sectors is essential.

Governance. In our sample, primary oversight is largely community-based. Nearly half are overseen by collaborative bodies with about one-quarter led by school districts or other agencies. However, day-to-day management – including implementing and coordinating activities, supervising staff, and evaluating and expanding program efforts – is much more school-centered. Parents, community members, providers, and school staff are most often involved in decision making at the site level, usually in an advisory role. The clear trend across the field is toward much greater community involvement in all aspects of decision making and an emphasis on building strong personal relationships.

Staffing. Nearly two-thirds of these school-community initiatives have a full-time coordinator at the site level responsible for implementing and coordinating activities. The majority of initiatives consider a full-time, on-site coordinator a necessity, although some have opted for part-time coordinators as a way to keep costs manageable while expanding the number of sites involved. In more than two-thirds of these initiatives, coordinators report to and are at least partially supervised by school principals – whether or not they are school district employees – however in the best of situations the principal and coordinator work as partners. A more typical relationship between initiative staff and schools is that of guest and host. As trust and effective working relationships grow and as school staff experience clear benefits, more equal partnerships develop.

Financing. Most school-community initiatives rely on a primary source of core cash funding to provide a significant portion of their operating costs and to ensure some degree of stability. State funds, nonprofit organizations (including United Way, universities traditional service-delivery organizations, and foundations), and local general-purpose government are the three primary sources of this core support. The majority of initiatives, nearly 60%, provide an average site with $100,000 or less in cash support each year. Local school districts are not a typical source of primary cash funding, though they are an important source of redirected and in-kind services. Multiple funding sources and heavy reliance on noncash support make it technically difficult and time-consuming for school-community initiatives to determine costs incurred, costs avoided, and benefits on a routine basis.

Activities. Most initiatives provide a broad set of activities connected to all four of the major approaches associated with school-community initiatives. Virtually every initiative provides tutoring and literacy services, parent education, and referral services, while activities related to housing and economic development are offered least. Field experience suggests that initiatives need time to experiment and to mature before they are flexible enough to expand and adapt their major purposes and strategies while staying true to a central mission.

Location. School-community initiatives have made commendable progress toward the vision of a "lighted schoolhouse" available 24-hours a day, year-round for people of all ages to learn, to recreate, and to solve common problems together. In the vast majority of initiatives, the bulk of activities take place on school grounds. But most initiatives also use community locations – churches, neighborhood centers, housing complexes – at

(see **Trends** on page 16)

Community for Learning: Connection with Community Services

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The effort by school communities to create educational opportunities for all students and to prepare them for the challenges that await them in the 21st century requires the best from all of us. However, the fragmented services-delivery system in place for serving children and families in the United States today is inadequate for meeting the physical, social, and learning needs of today's children and youth, especially those beset by significant adversities. Collaboration across health, education, and social services agencies, as well as between the public and private sectors, has become a necessity.

Federal Programs Connecting School, Family, and Community

During the past five years, community members, educators, and other service providers have begun many school-home-community programs. Some of these programs established school-linked, comprehensive service-delivery systems, while others adopted school-based, co-located, comprehensive services. Still others were designed to make community-based learning environments and resources such as libraries, museums, and recreational facilities available to children and families. Programs invited family involvement and regarded the family as a full partner necessary to the fulfillment of program goals. Regardless of their design, these programs harnessed the resources of school, family, and community to achieve their ends. Recently enacted federal policies, such as the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration initiative and the 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative, have advanced the coordination and integration of resources in a coherent manner, and have encouraged an end to separate projects that are "added on" to existing programs or projects in schools.

The Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSRD) program, new in 1998, is designed to help raise student achievement by assisting public schools across the country in implementing a comprehensive approach to school reform that is based on reliable research and effective practices, and includes an emphasis on basic academics and parental involvement. The focus of the CSRD program is schoolwide change in schools where there is the greatest need to substantially improve student achievement. This initiative will help expand the quality and quantity of schoolwide reform efforts that enable all children, particularly low-achieving children, to meet challenging academic standards.

The 21st Century Community Learning Centers program was established by Congress to award grants to rural and inner-city public schools or consortia of schools to promote family-community-school cooperation to enable them to plan, implement, or expand projects that benefit the educational, health, social services, cultural, and recreational needs of the community. In 1999, the program will provide nearly $100 million to rural and inner-city public schools to address the educational needs of their communities after school, on weekends, and over the summers. The focus of this program is to provide expanded learning opportunities for participating children in a safe, drug-free, and supervised environment.

The Community for Learning Program

The Community for Learning (CFL) program was designed to serve as a services-delivery framework for providing more effective school responses to student diversity to ensure student learning success. At the core of CFL is a coordinated approach to services delivery that calls for a shared-responsibility approach to achieving student success by collaborative teams of teachers, parents, and community agencies. The fundamental question that CFL was designed to address is: "What conditions are required to cause dramatic improvements in the learning of children and youth in the nation's inner cities?"

The CFL program consists of seven major components, focusing on (a) the learning needs of students, (b) the organizational and administrative support requirements needed to achieve program implementation, and (c) the staff development needs of school personnel and related service providers. The components are: a site-specific implementation plan, a schoolwide organizational struc-

ture, a staff development plan, an instructional learning management system, an integrated assessment-instruction process, a school-family-community involvement plan, and a school-linked, comprehensive, coordinated health and human services delivery plan.

Implementation of the CFL program seeks: (a) improved achievement of each student, including and particularly those at the margins; (b) a teaching process and patterns of active learning that are consistent with the research base on effective practices; and (c) positive attitudes by students and the school staff toward their school and, most importantly, the expectation that every student has the capacity for educational success.

Findings from program implementation to date show that CFL students tend to have higher levels of aspiration for academic learning and better academic self-concepts than non-CFL students, and that CFL students outperform non-CFL students on math and reading achievement scores.

CFL Implementation in Stetson Middle School: A Case Study

Stetson Middle School is a Title I schoolwide project school in Philadelphia that has been characterized as the most turbulent middle school in the district.

As part of CFL, Stetson students are placed randomly into one of three vertically organized house structures, located on different school floors. The Red House, one of the three houses, has initiated all three components of the CFL program.

Stetson Middle School leadership and staff were early proponents of school-linked services, and they looked to the CFL program to serve as a framework that addressed this need for a holistic approach to services. Initial implementation of the CFL program began during the 1992-93 school year. A pattern of increased attendance was observed during the initial two years of CFL program implementation. The student attendance rate was 75% in 1992-93 and 79% in 1993-94. By contrast the attendance rate for the Red House was 85% in 1992-93 and 86% in 1993-94.

Several innovative projects have been initiated to increase parent involvement in school activities at Stetson, including biweekly parent workshops on a variety of topics of concern to parents and the community; extension services by neighborhood agencies that provide family counseling, adult education, and job training; and social outings that include both parents and children, ranging from hayrides to museum trips to sporting events.

In addition, several strategies were developed in collaboration with the Philadelphia Free Library to encourage children and families to read. For example, acquiring a library card became easier, a book return system was established in the school, and the school became involved in the planning and support of local library activities and events. Four focus areas – academic, self-responsibility, resiliency, and health – were identified, and projects were categorized as having one to all four of these focus areas.

Findings on Student Outcomes

Because of the unique demographics of Stetson, no comparison middle school could be identified. However, since not all of the houses at Stetson participated in program implementation during the two initial CFL program implementation years, program versus nonprogram comparisons were carried out to determine program impact.

Student Perceptions of Their Classroom/School Environment

MANOVA (multivariate analysis of variance) revealed significant differences in the students' overall perceptions of their classroom/school learning environments. Students in the Red House showed more positive perceptions on 9 of the 11 subscales. Students felt that their instructional/learning environments were more multicultural, social, active, nontraditional, and interdisciplinary. According to the students, classroom environments offered more affiliation, guidance, teacher support, and participation. In addition, they indicated a higher rate of constructive feedback, higher student aspirations, more positive self-concepts, and a clearer sense of the rules governing class and school learning environments.

Student Achievement

Overall, the mean reading and math achievement scores of the students in the Red House were found to be slightly higher (although not statistically significant) than the mean scores of the rest of the school. It is of interest to note the program's positive impact on students in the bottom and top 20% of the achievement distribution. For both program implementation years, less than 20% of students in the Red House scored in the bottom 20% of the achievement distribution of

(see **CFL** on page 16)

Schools, Community-Based Interventions, and Children's Learning and Development: What's the Connect?

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Policymakers, school board members, educational practitioners, social service providers, child and youth advocates, and community activists might agree on their goals for children: that they be literate, learn to think critically and make informed decisions, be able to contribute to their families and communities, hold clear values, and engage the world in a way that enables them to realize their full potential. But once the topic shifts to action plans to achieve those agreed-upon outcomes and how to measure them – and to the allocation of resources, responsibilities, and priorities – these same rational and reasoned professionals and advocates often disagree, sometimes vehemently. These differing perceptions not only compete with each other but also threaten to undermine one another, rather than enhance the collective effectiveness of improving children's outcomes.

Efforts designed to strengthen school- and community-based interventions in the hope of improving educational achievement and other important results for children are reaching historic proportions. These activities seem to reflect wide accord on several characteristics of the problem. First, most informed observers agree that our current schools and school systems are not well positioned to meet the challenge of educating all American children at the high levels required by a 21st century global economy and society. Second, knowledgeable policymakers, social reformers, and educators note with alarm that the individual schools having the most difficult time meeting rising expectations are those that serve children who are "at risk," where the children live in persistent and concentrated poverty, with high incidences of ill health, inadequate housing, unemployment, crime, fractured families, substance abuse, and alienation. And, finally, regardless of one's approach to the problem, all those who work with children seem to agree on the urgency of the situation.

Given this urgency and the many opportunities to intervene, the most obvious solution would seem to be that all with a stake in children's successful transition to adulthood should take action in each of their respective domains. However, as reformers move from demonstrating that improved outcomes are possible within each of these arenas to efforts intended to affect more than a single school or neighborhood, they come up against the real-world constraints of limited resources and the reality that a reform in one sector may impede or work at cross-purposes to a reform in another.

Approaches to Reform

In trying to puzzle out some of the important questions of resource allocation, priority setting, and the distribution of responsibilities, it is stunning how little is known about the comparative impact of the many varied strategies now in use. The different approaches seem to derive less from experience and empirical data, and more from various reformers' backgrounds, affiliations, and ideology. At the risk of overstating differences, we hope to illustrate why the community-schools people, the social service reformers, the community builders, the child and youth development advocates, and the school reformers often seem like people from different regions of the country, each speaking the same language, but in a unique dialect.

The Community Schools Voice. The leaders of the "community schools movement" believe that, in populations of disadvantaged students, school achievement will not improve, nor will broader goals valued by many citizens be reached, in the absence of significant improvements in the accessibility of effective services and of family and community support for school learning. Some believe that all schools should become "full-service community schools" in which school administrators and program coordinators jointly administer the delivery of quality education and the health, social, and cultural services required in the community. The Emerging Coalition for Community Schools envisions schools that increase children's well-being by using five essential and connected strategies: quality education, youth development, family involvement, community development, and family support (with the last defined as coordinated health, mental health, and social services, parent education, and leadership development). The argument for this position rests on the belief that, if the noneducational needs that

poor children bring into the classroom go unaddressed, the children will not succeed at school no matter how effective the instruction.

The Social Service Voice. Social service reformers are enthusiastic supporters of placing social services at the school site and have become, in many instances, the backbone of the community schools movement. They point out that school buildings and grounds are often the only functioning facility with an avowed public purpose remaining in a depleted neighborhood. They have an intense interest in finding ways to use school buildings during nonschool hours in order to make the schools the physical centers for providing the services and supports that might otherwise be unavailable or inaccessible.

The Community Builder Voice. Leaders of community revitalization efforts see schools as an engine to build community cohesion and social capital to improve outcomes for children growing up in depleted neighborhoods. Some recent research supports a greater use of schools as the hub for rebuilding communities and suggests that children fare far better in neighborhoods rich in shared attitudes, norms, and values that make up social capital, and that social capital grows best through deliberate efforts. One review of urban school reform strategies concludes that the crisis of urban education can only be successfully addressed by renewing the school-community link.

Youth and Child Development Perspective. An additional argument for broadening the mission and activity of the schools comes out of the traditions of youth and child development and experiential learning. Advocates who would relate "primary services" – such as Boys and Girls Clubs, Little Leagues, and church choirs, designed to engage young adolescents – more closely to schools believe that these services offer unique opportunities for the development of more "authentic and supportive relationships" between adults and youngsters than is characteristic of schools. They also believe that greater learning is possible by offering hands-on opportunities to apply and develop academic skills in real-world settings.

The School Reform Voice. Many education reformers agree with the contention of service reformers, community builders, and youth development advocates, that school success depends on improvement in the condition of children, families, and neighborhoods. But other school reformers, while acknowledging that children from disadvantaged families and neighborhoods are likely to have multiple unmet needs, insist that efforts to meet these needs must not interfere with the schools' primary academic mission. The Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE), for example, contends that schools and school systems can achieve dramatic and sustained successes with disadvantaged students when they put a laser-like focus on academic learning. This contention grows from the belief that, for populations of disadvantaged students, school achievement will not improve in the absence of significant improvements in classroom instruction, which is most likely achieved in schools and school districts that adopt a school ethos that clearly – some would say exclusively – focuses on academic achievement.

Can parallel reform efforts aimed at improved services and supports, at youth and child development, and at community revitalization coexist, interact, and enhance those activities targeted at improved academic instruction? Indeed, there are many reformers who take a BOTH-AND position, contending that, in populations of disadvantaged students, school achievement will not significantly improve in the absence of BOTH better classroom instruction AND enhanced availability and accessibility of effective services, family and community support for school learning, community cohesion, and growth in social capital.

Policy Implications

Rather than argue questions about reform ideologically, reformers and researchers should try to shed some light on how competing strategies actually link to outcomes by systematic observation and analysis of the differential impact of a variety of strategies. If the empirical data support our hypotheses that school-based outcomes – including attendance, school completion, and school achievement – are most likely to improve when the school and school district put their highest priority on improving instruction, and that the nonacademic services are best accomplished when community-based organizations and agencies take responsibility for initiating, organizing, and sustaining the needed services and supports, then several policy and practice implications become clear:

- Community-based organizations and agencies other than schools should take primary responsibility for organizing and sustaining the services and supports needed to bolster schools and school learning.

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Furthering Education:
The Relationship of Schools and Other Organizations

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Children today face markedly enhanced expectations and substantial challenges in meeting them. For the first time, children have to develop a mix of complex intellectual and interpersonal competencies in order to find productive employment in an information economy and to contribute to the functioning of a democratic society and of communities within it.

At the same time, children are confronted with increased challenges that often impede learning and development. The changing structure and diminished stability of families, along with patterns of parent employment, translate into fewer, less consistently available resources and supports for children. And compared with any other age group, a greater percentage of children are living in poverty and facing the obstacles to daily life and development that poverty imposes.

Related expectations and challenges confront the institutions with a stake in children. Beyond attendance, public schools in the United States are now accountable for increasing the achievement of all students. Schools are also expected to deal with, or succeed despite, the challenges in children's lives that accompany them into the classroom. Other sectors serving children, including health care and social services, are also experiencing substantial and sustained pressure, internal and public, to function more effectively. In many cases, this is accompanied by, or even seen to depend on, movement toward a coordinated, cross-sector response to children's needs.

To meet this complex set of conditions, public policies and public pressures have stimulated an increasing number and variety of alliances among schools and other organizations. With such increasingly familiar names as full service schools, community schools, and school-business partnerships, ever greater numbers of schools are creating formal connections with other organizations, including health and social service agencies, community-based organizations, civic and religious groups, businesses, and others. Schools are serving as sites for the delivery of integrated services; as stimulants, lending their leadership and resources to initiatives on behalf of children, families, and the larger community; and as community institutions that are – or are being pressured to be – both respectful of and responsive to the perspectives of local interests and actors.

Despite increasing investments in school-organization connections, little is known about the range of purposes for which they are being made, the mix of organizations involved, the trajectories along which they develop, or their actual as compared to their intended effects. Connections between schools and other organizations are thus being formed at a rate that has caused action on them to outstrip knowledge about them.

Our research on school connections is anchored in our interest in understanding the distribution of social responsibility for the learning and development of children as it is now shared among schools and other organizations and as it might be. By social responsibility we mean how each of the institutions and organizations in children's lives is accountable for contributing to their development, how much separate institutions – families, schools, faith-based organizations, health and social service providers, businesses, and others – are expected to enhance particular aspects of children's learning and development, and how they are, or should be, responsible for extending the opportunities for learning and development beyond these limits.

It might appear that there is a straightforward division of responsibility for children in our society, with families having responsibility for caring for children and youth, schools for their education, services for addressing their problems, and businesses for hiring them. But these distinctions are not so clear in reality. Nor is it clear that they should be, as each of these institutions can and often do fulfill a range of these responsibilities. In this research, connections provide a lens for examining how this responsibility is being distributed and with what benefits for children. An overarching question informing this study is what mix of contributions best leverages the resources of each of the institutions and organizations

in children's lives and which is the optimal mix for the learning and development of children.

Over the last two years, we have examined the range of connections forged between urban public schools and the organizations around them. By a "connection," we mean an intentional and ongoing relationship between a school and one or more external organizations designed to directly or indirectly enhance children's learning and development or address obstacles that impede it. To study more interactive connections, we drew some boundaries around the connections of interest. Thus, we learned more intensively about connections in which schools and other organizations actively work together, in which more than information is exchanged or equipment donated.

Because our intention was to illuminate the multiple ways in which schools and other organizations are working together, we set out to identify the broadest possible range of these relationships. Toward this end, we identified and have learned about 249 school connections and intensively studied 60 of them, distilling the principal purposes and patterns that distinguish them, tracing their origins and development, and examining what is known about what they achieve.

In this research we have studied what connections provide to individuals, what is exchanged among organizations, and what is offered to and from communities and schools.

Through connections, individuals have access to provisions of two kinds: services designed to alleviate or resolve problems and developmental opportunities that aim to develop or extend a range of individual competencies. Outside organizations operating in schools provide services to students, parents, and other residents. These services include health care, social services like counseling, and assistance with basic needs like food, clothing, and shelter. Schools and other organizations collaborate to provide developmental opportunities that aim to build individual competencies including academic skills; personal, social, and civic competencies; vocational preparation; and creative expression.

In addition to the provisions offered to individuals, all connections also involve the exchange of a range of resources among organizations. These include physical resources such as access to space, equipment, and supplies; program resources such as curriculum and training; and human resources such as individuals from one organization working with or in another.

Connections can also involve provisions to and from communities and schools. Opening school buildings for the programs of local organizations, and the networking among individuals who participate in them, is a pervasive aspect of most connections. Fewer connections also provide activities in which schools and other organizations are involved in strategically promoting a particular aspect of community development such as economic support (e.g., through local employment and purchasing), physical development (e.g., of housing, parks, play spaces, and other aspects of the physical infrastructure), and community building (e.g., mobilizing community residents around issues facing the community). Finally we found just a few connections that see the neighborhood around the school as an intentional locus of action, seeking contributions from local organizations and individuals toward a specific learning goal for children, like ensuring that all students read at grade level by third grade.

In looking at what is given and gained among schools and other organizations, we found that schools are involved in connections with external organizations that address the full range of their functions. An array of organizations is engaged in assisting in the operation of schools, in improving the schools' curriculum, and in directly teaching students. We also found that schools are moving beyond their usual boundaries to use the facilities and staffs of other organizations as sites for and sources of teaching and learning. However, by and large, we did not find exchanges of like kind in the other direction. What schools principally provide in these connections is use of their space and, through it, access to children, rather than direct involvement in the programs of other organizations or in efforts to link the content of these programs with the curriculum of the schools.

Beyond describing the full range of existing school connections, we focused on a substantive area not much examined in other work to date: the dynamic character of these connections. While we initially expected to find established, more or less static models of school connections, we found, instead, that one of the principal characteristics of

(see **Furthering** on page 17)

Lessons from the Evaluation of New Jersey's School-Based Youth Services Program

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For many early advocates of school-linked services and full-service schools, the primary rationale for these arrangements was nonacademic: to address the fragmentation of and inadequate access to important services for children in need. Through using the school as a satellite location, service providers (whether health, mental health, or employment preparation) could furnish students with an integrated array of services in one easy-to-reach location.

However, as school-linked services and community-school collaborations have increased, expectations have grown that these service arrangements can address noneducational problems, usually associated with poverty, that act as barriers to student learning. As a result, school-linked programs face increased demands to produce educational outcomes as the pressure intensifies for schools to meet more stringent performance standards.

This paper will use the evaluation of one of the earliest school-linked service integration programs – the New Jersey School-Based Youth Services Program (SBYSP) – to explore the potential benefits and challenges of expecting educational outcomes from service-focused school-community collaborations.

The School-Based Youth Services Program

In 1987, the New Jersey Department of Human Services initiated the School-Based program, the first statewide initiative in the country to integrate a range of services for adolescents in one location at or near schools.

By creating partnerships between schools and community agencies, the program sought to provide young people with the services and supports they needed to navigate the adolescent years and "complete their education, obtain skills leading to employment or additional education, and lead a mentally and physically healthy life."

With ongoing help from a School-Based support team in the state department of human services, the projects began their first full year of operation in 1988 in 29 New Jersey communities. As an early model of service integration, the program has won prestigious national awards for excellence in public policy.

The basic SBYSP model has five core areas of activities and services: recreation, health, mental health, employment counseling and preparation, and substance abuse treatment and prevention.
As a whole, SBYSP services and activities, offered year-round, are designed to treat existing problems, prevent the emergence of negative youth behaviors, and promote positive youth development.

In 1995, the Academy for Educational Development (AED), an educational evaluation and technical assistance organization, was selected to conduct an evaluation of SBYSP, including an outcome-based study of the program at six sites, designed to increase understanding of how individual projects operate and their impact on the young people who use them. The effort that SBYSP projects invest in developing activities in collaboration with school staff has helped many projects become integrated into the life of the school, avoiding the "we–they" stance that sometimes characterizes school-community collaborations in their early stages.

The most frequent activities that School-Based staff take part in include: participating on numerous school committees (including the principal's cabinet, the child-study and crisis management teams, and the conflict resolution and school safety committees); planning and executing school events (such as freshman orientation activities, alcohol- and drug-free post-prom and graduation parties, and food drives); conducting classes, workshops, and in-service sessions for both students and teachers (on topics such as the negative impact of stereotyping, contraception, AIDS, depression, and sexual harassment); advocating for and supporting special groups of students (such as special education students and teen parents, including on-site child care); and providing substance abuse prevention and crisis management activities.

The arena in which most School-Based projects work is carefully circumscribed by the promise made at the program's initiation that the program would not do anything the school could or should be doing. In addition,

SBYSP directors often have more than enough to do just fulfilling their central mission: helping individual students.

Despite this limitation, the positive impact of SBYSP projects on the school is evident at many sites. Teachers interviewed during visits to projects were quick to express appreciation for the counseling available to students and relief that there was somewhere to send students in difficulty, while in the past the only recourse was often punitive.

Teachers and administrators also recognized that School-Based's ability to meet students' personal needs helped free up both teachers' and students' attention and energy for teaching and learning.

Findings from the Outcome-Based Study

To measure the outcomes that students derive from participation in SBYSP activities and/or use of SBYSP services, AED has followed for two years the cohort of students who entered ninth grade in September 1996. Students completed specially designed confidential surveys at three points (fall 1996, late spring 1997, and late spring 1998), and AED collected school data and tracked a small sample of students from each school via individual interviews and focus groups. Using the quantitative data, we were able to compare the outcomes for students who had taken advantage of SBYSP to those who had not, controlling for initial differences in students' behavior, background, and situational characteristics. A total of 1,509 youth (84% of the cohort) responded to the baseline survey, a total of 1,205 students took the follow-up survey, and a total of 922 students took both. The results reported below are based on those 922 students who took both. Of the 922, a total of 402 (44%) students had used an SBYSP service or participated in an SBYSP activity at some point during their first or second year in high school, and a total of 520 (56%) had not. The analysis of the baseline verifies what the practitioners had long suspected: the students they served on a regular basis were at greater risk than the rest of the student body. Users reported much higher levels of family stress, including divorce, residence in unsafe neighborhoods, frequent moving, and financial, drug, and alcohol problems. Fewer users than nonusers affirmed their intention to avoid pregnancy during high school, while more users than nonusers reported that they had already had sexual intercourse. More users than nonusers reported frequent feelings of unhappiness, sadness, depression, tension, being worried, anger, and destructiveness. More users than nonusers reported that they had been involved in violent behavior, and substantially more users than nonusers reported that they had experimented with cigarettes, alcohol, or marijuana in the two months prior to the survey.

Overall, the responses to the baseline survey clearly demonstrated that SBYSP is attracting those students most in need of assistance if they are to avoid more serious problems in both personal and educational domains.

Responses to the follow-up survey, administered at the end of the second year in high school, showed an overall worsening pattern for all students – though, in many outcome areas, without controlling for initial differences, SBYSP users appeared to lose more ground than nonusers. This is not surprising, considering SBYSP users were more at risk and engaged in more risky behavior than nonusers at the baseline survey. Despite this, users appeared to make gains compared with nonusers in a few areas. Specifically, users showed greater improvement from the baseline to the follow-up survey than nonusers in average daily attendance, grade-point average, being sent to the office for discipline, multiple suspensions, and use of tobacco and alcohol.

Controlling for baseline differences between users and nonusers revealed that participation in SBYSP reduced the gap between the two groups with positive effects on 31 of 37 outcomes and statistically significant positive effects on: damaging, destroying, or marking up somebody else's property on purpose; using contraceptives to prevent pregnancy; using condoms for STD prevention; smoking cigarettes; having trouble going to sleep or staying asleep; feeling angry and destructive; worrying too much about things; feeling unhappy, sad, or depressed; and thinking about killing oneself.

Users also showed improvements in the areas of expressing higher educational aspirations and accumulating credits toward graduation. The results suggest that those students who took advantage of SBYSP services and activities did indeed benefit from them in quite important ways that reduce their risks of a range of negative outcomes and increase the probability of positive outcomes.

The lack of broader educational outcomes for SBYSP is not

(see **Lessons** on page 18)

State Education Agency Support for School-Community Collaboration in the Mid-Atlantic States

Shelly Hara, Council of Chief State School Officers, with William Boyd, Laboratory for Student Success

Schools can no longer afford to operate in isolation as they work to guarantee educational success and contribute to the overall well-being of children and families and the communities in which they live. School-linked and school-based health and human services programs have sprung up around the country in response to the many pressing problems facing children and youth in our schools today. Such programs seek to build connecting mechanisms for effective communication, coordinated service delivery, and more efficient mobilization of community resources. The goal is to play a role in strengthening families and communities, while working to reduce and prevent barriers to school success and healthy development, such as dropping out of school, substance abuse, juvenile delinquency, and teen pregnancy.

Schools are also involving and reaching out to parents, community organizations, and businesses to improve student achievement, transform themselves into more vital and effective learning communities, and better meet the special educational needs of their students. They do this by involving community partners in decision-making and school-improvement plans and by bringing additional supportive services onto school campuses.

State education agencies play a role in supporting many of these school-community collaborations, but the nature of state involvement in local efforts varies depending on how closely the goals of those efforts are connected to the mission of the state education agency, the nature of the funding, and who or what entity has programmatic responsibility. At the same time, at the state level, state education agencies can work alongside other state agencies as partners in larger, more comprehensive efforts to improve services and supports for children and families.

The mid-Atlantic states of Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania are no exception. This paper examines the role of state education agencies in these four states in supporting school-community collaborations. The findings are based on site visits and interviews conducted in 1996-97 with state education agency staff and staff representing other state agencies that address the needs of children and families.

School-Community Collaboration

A number of factors set the context for collaboration, and make it difficult to generalize about the nature of support for school-community collaboration across states. These factors include:

- *state context* – including geographic size, population, history, industry and economy, and politics;
- *policy context* – including the extent to which local, state, and federal programs promote collaboration and more comprehensive community-based approaches to serving children and families, and the amount of flexibility they allow;
- *political factors* – encompassing turnover in leaders, anti-government sentiment, and the public's general dissatisfaction with public schools and increased demands for accountability;
- *the changing role of the state education agency* – encompassing a growing tension between adherents of schools needing to attend to the holistic needs of children and families and those believ-ing the push for vouchers, school choice, etc., requires a strict focus on academic achievement only, and the implications of these broad education missions for state education staff support and enforcement roles; and
- *the definition of collaboration* – which varies by community in terms of stakeholders involved and what level of commitment is required of stakeholders.

State education agencies vary in their support of school-community collaboration in the degree to which they view collaborative activities as integral to their mission of ensuring student success. Most have initiated programs that involve collaboration between educators and service providers or partnerships between schools and outside organizations or parents. These programs run the gamut and include, but are not limited to,

prekindergarten programs, teen-pregnancy-prevention initiatives, school-based or school-linked health centers, family service/resource centers, discipline or violence prevention programs, family-involvement initiatives, student-assistance programs, and school-to-career programs. Each of the mid-Atlantic states has some form of cross-agency collaborative activity focusing on children and families. Many state education agency staff participate in numerous interdepartmental working groups and task forces that may include some outside state government, such as university researchers or non-profit organizations.

State education agencies may support or encourage school-community collaboration as a part of a school improvement effort. In some cases, the state education agency may require that low-performing schools adopt an improvement plan that includes providing supportive services for students and families. Increasingly, schools are working with community partners and engaging parents in their efforts to improve student achievement.

State agencies vary in size and in the number of bureaucratic layers that exist within them, and therefore vary as to the ease with which collaboration is possible. In spite of the fact that state education agencies are increasingly involved in collaboration, they continue to be organized or staffed around specific federal programs and funding streams, state-run programs, or programs that utilize a combination of state and federal funds.

The funding streams that support school-community collaboration include, among others, Compensatory Education, Special Education, Safe and Drug-free Schools, and School-to-Work. In each of the mid-Atlantic states, the bulk of collaborative activities and staff participating in them resides in a single branch of the state education agency.

Having an individual or unit that works solely on interagency initiatives may help to create the expectation of interagency cooperation or collaboration for the state education agency, but it also may allow those outside these units to assume that they do not have to participate in such activities.

Challenges and Barriers to School-Community Collaboration

While state education staff generally agree that collaboration is the requirement of the day, there are still many barriers and challenges to be overcome, including:

Bureaucratic and Cultural Differences Between Education and Collaborating Agencies. Interviewees cited a number of practical barriers that evolved from bureaucratic and cultural differences among agencies and service sectors. Those involved in collaborative efforts, from state education agency staff to school personnel to service providers, lack a common language with which to work together. "Turfism" – that is, agencies wanting to protect their own service domains and funding – and duplication of services due to turfism were also commonly cited as barriers.

Pressure on Educators to Be Accountable for Discrete Educational Results. State education agency staff find it difficult to address the extra-educational needs of students while juggling the many demands of education reform, including standards and assessment, special education, state-takeover schools, and other politicized and public issues such as violence in schools, school choice, and desegregation.

Collaboration Takes Time, Money, and Frequent Contact to Build Working Relationships. In light of recent downsizing, many state education agency personnel believe their departments are understaffed, and collaborative responsibilities are often undertaken as additional work beyond regular duties. While building relationships is key to any collaborative effort, turnover among collaborative partners requires constant reeducation and time to build new relationships. Because it may take some time for an initiative to show results, partners can have difficulty sustaining it through a change in leadership.

Changing and Balancing Roles. Education maintains a strong history of local control with formal governance bodies in place, while health and human services agencies increasingly are devolving authority once held at the federal and state levels to the local level. This growing emphasis on local governance requires state education agency staff to work harder at maintaining a balance between providing some oversight while respecting local authority and decision making.

(see **State** on page 18)

Enhancing Federal Support for Connecting Educational Improvement Strategies and Collaborative Services

Meredith I. Honig, Stanford University and Jeanne D. Jehl, Consultant

Educators – particularly those working in high-poverty, urban neighborhoods – increasingly recognize that students' opportunities to learn may be enhanced by various partnerships between schools and public and private youth-serving agencies in their neighborhoods (e.g., social services agencies, Boys and Girls Clubs).

While school-community partnerships have long traditions in many cities and neighborhoods, the federal policy context in which these initiatives operate has changed markedly over the past 10 to 15 years. Particularly in education, federal funding sources place fewer restrictions on planning, administration, and use of federal funds – flexibility that schools and school districts could use for school-community partnerships. An increasing number of programs require some participation by agencies and individuals outside schools (e.g., youth organizations, social service providers, parents) in planning for and implementing various education reform strategies.

In this paper, we illustrate that recent federal policy developments in education suggest important opportunities for schools, school districts, and states to enhance school-community collaboration for improved student learning and a growing capacity at the federal level to support it. We argue, however, that these developments may be limited in fundamental ways. We conclude with several recommendations for how the U.S. Department of Education (ED) in particular can move beyond waivers and build on its growing capacity to support such collaboration.

Defining School-Community Connections for Improved Student Learning

School-community collaboration comes in many forms. What does school-community collaboration look like – how is it designed, how does it operate, what are youths' experiences at such sites day-to-day – when it improves youths' learning specifically? Individual studies and syntheses of research suggest that many partnerships between schools and community agencies generally focus on improving learning outcomes as one of their many goals. When they do focus on learning, they generally aim to *remove barriers* to youths' learning by improving other outcomes such as health and basic needs, thereby enabling students to "really learn" and teachers to "really teach" – though research to date does not support the assumption that addressing students' nonacademic needs by itself will lead to improvements in academic measures. School-community sites must proactively *enable* learning, both in and out of school.

One primary goal of a recent research review by Honig, Kahne, and McLaughlin was to highlight that removing barriers to learning does not by itself mean that learning is enabled. They developed a working definition of how school-community collaboration may relate to learning outcomes. Their research yielded the following definition of "school-community connections for opportunity to learn" that addresses both barriers to learning and factors that enable it. Accordingly, this paper is concerned with how federal policy can support initiatives that can be described as follows.

School-community connections for improved student learning are:

- focused on "whole youth"
- focused on all youth
- strengths-based/pro-social
- responsive to specific youth and neighborhoods
- youth-centered, not organization-centered
- developmental

Current Federal Policy Efforts

The review by Honig, Kahne, and McLaughlin suggests that school-community connections is a distinct type of policy problem that may be characterized by the following features and challenges:

- The framing of the problem matters significantly to how we think about possible solutions.
- Supportive policy advances a set of principles of best practice.
- Implementation of principles of best practice requires new supports and roles throughout the policy system.

Our analysis suggests that a policy approach in support of school-community connections should frame the need for school-community connections around enabling learning, and should focus on principles of best practice. Beyond that, it suggests that supportive policy goes beyond formal policy to include a range of supports to enable practice at school-community sites.

While the scope and substance of efforts to use policy to support school-community collaboration vary greatly, policymakers at the federal and state levels have generally used three types of policy strategies to facilitate connections between schools and communities: (1) use of the bully pulpit, resource centers, and other vehicles outside the formal policy-making process to advocate for or otherwise steer schools and school districts toward school-community collaboration; (2) new funds for collaboration; and (3) waivers and regulatory relief.

Through these approaches, ED calls attention to the importance of school-community connections to achieve the broad purposes of schooling. But the following observations suggest that the current federal provisions will continue to tinker only at the margins of schools and school districts without a stronger and broader frame around enabling learning, enhanced funding for collaborative work, and support to local and state educational agencies in using the new flexibility to expand school-community collaboration for learning.

- *Federal provisions may not frame the need for connections around enabling learning or adequate conceptions of when and where learning takes place.*

  Efforts to use federal policy to facilitate school-community connections have emphasized three roles for "community" with regard to learning: (1) youth organizations, service providers, and others – particularly when linked with schools – can improve the safety, health, and social and emotional status of youth so that they might come to school more ready to learn; (2) these organizations can extend academic time into after-school hours; and (3) other federal efforts involve parents in planning and reviewing the use of funds, determining content and performance standards, and otherwise participating in various aspects of school governance. These roles for community signal that ED has begun to take an important leadership role in focusing attention on the significance of youths' time and resources out of school on their performance in school, and on the fact that schools may have partners in their neighborhoods for realizing the broad purposes of schooling. Beyond that, research has found that youth organizations themselves provide essential settings for learning and for building the skills and competencies necessary for school success. Such conceptions of what learning is, where learning takes place, and the types of experiences that may prepare youth to engage in school generally have not framed the purpose, design, or implementation of ED's collaborative programs.

- *Federal provisions may not provide schools, school districts, and state educational agencies with adequate* incentives *for using, or* signals *that they can and should use, these waiver provisions to initiate and implement school-community connections.*

  There is little evidence to date that the availability of waivers has meant that they have been sought and/or used to initiate changes in schools or in the relationship between schools and community agencies. Applying for federal waivers is a time-consuming and often difficult process that can require technical knowledge of federal, state, and local educational programs and education codes and laws.

- *Just because schools, school districts, and states have new opportunities for collaboration through waivers and discretionary grants, this does not mean they will have the capacity or the readiness necessary to use them to initiate and enhance school-community collaboration that improves student learning.*

  By design, waivers and discretionary grant programs place the onus for devising reforms and identifying, applying for, and managing appropriate waivers on local agencies – usually school districts and sometimes schools. The administrative apparatus and knowledge necessary to apply for waivers and use discretionary grant programs for the essentially entrepreneurial work of school-community collaboration may simply not exist in most school districts. The General Accounting Office found that "although information-related issues are very important to school district officials, the recent flexibility initiatives increase the amount of information districts need, rather than simplifying or streamlining information on federal requirements."

(see **Enhancing** on page 19)

Trends
(continued from page 3)

least sometimes. Every initiative provides a range of after-school activities, programming continues into the evening hours in about two-thirds of the initiatives, and just over 30% conduct weekend activities.

Participation. All initiatives are focused on young people, but in most initiatives the majority of activities involve parents and family members as well. In most cases, anyone who lives in the neighborhood or district surrounding each site is welcome to participate in at least some of its activities. Although expensive services like case management, health care, and mental health counseling are usually targeted at high-risk groups, the direction within the field is toward making activities universally available to the entire community.

Accountability. In most school-community initiatives, results-based accountability is still in its beginning stages. Much more needs to be learned about what initiatives are accomplishing, for whom, under what conditions, and at what cost. Substantial research efforts conducted by a variety of outside evaluators are currently taking place in several of these initiatives.

Technical Assistance. Every initiative we studied has benefited from an available source of technical assistance. Nearly 90% were interested in related technical areas: designing results and accountability systems, and developing long-range funding. An equal percentage also wanted help in engaging public support, while over 80% wanted help building parent participation and professional development.

Recommendations

A variety of recommendations flow from our study's findings, including:

- intensified involvement of the private sector in the creation, oversight, and management of school-community initiatives to ensure the field's diversity, innovation, and broad-based acceptability.
- expanded public-sector leadership at all levels of government to provide incentives and support for increasing numbers of local efforts to cover start-up costs, provide sustained core community initiatives at levels needed to reach large numbers of children.
- expanded development of community-based collaborative bodies to provide oversight, ensure complementarity among separate-but-related reform efforts, strengthen public understanding, and formulate sustainable financing strategies.
- organizing site selection and expansion plans around school clusters that include elementary, middle, and secondary schools to ensure services, supports, and opportunities appropriate to all age groups, including older adolescents.
- more activities during underserved times by increasing the location of activities at community-based locations, especially during weekends.
- substantial and long-term technical assistance from all levels of government and the philanthropic community focused especially on helping initiatives and sites work with key state and local partners to develop the key elements of a results-based accountability system.
- a comprehensive range of training and technical assistance to help initiatives develop purposeful and coherent ways of integrating purposes, strategies, and activities across services and reform approaches.
- increased communication, peer-to-peer technical assistance, and networking among initiatives and sites to increase the rate at which communities can learn from and assist each other.

With additional support from funders, more targeted training and technical assistance, and the "relentlessness and passion" that characterize every one of the initiatives in this study, schools and communities will continue to transform themselves, enrich young people's lives, and strengthen our collective future. ⌘

CFL
(continued from page 5)

Stetson in reading and math, and a larger percentage of Red House students than non-Red House students scored at the top 20% of the achievement distribution of Stetson in both reading and math.

Long-term Program Impact

Findings from a follow-up study of students who were in the CFL program at Stetson Middle School who then attended the comprehensive high school that serves Stetson students and other feeder middle schools in the neighborhood show a long-term impact of the CFL program on student achievement. Although the CFL program was not implemented in that particular high school, students who participated in the CFL program in their middle-school years were able to maintain the positive outcomes of the CFL program in high school.

CFL students showed a significantly lower high-school dropout rate (19%) than their peers in the same high school (60%); and 48% of the CFL eleventh-graders, compared to only 26% of non-CFL eleventh-graders, were performing at grade level.

Conclusion

The CFL program represents one attempt to find ways to reduce the co-occurring risks that surround many children and families; it provides a powerful instructional program that draws on multiple learning environments and is supported by a comprehensive services-delivery system. Although students' academic accomplishments are central to the program's success, school, family, and community resources are also invested in meeting a variety of other goals. As a site-based program, it is sensitive to the needs and preferences of students, the local neighborhood, and the school staff. It employs a program of staff development that is data-driven. Instruction in the CFL program relies on research-based, effective practices. Most importantly, it provides for collaboration among parents, community members, and teachers in harnessing resources to promote educational resilience and student learning. As a next step, we need to develop a knowledge base on how to expand what works at the school level to a system-wide reform effort to achieve the ultimate goal of establishing comprehensive school reform that is feasible and sustainable. ⌘

Schools

(continued from page 7)

- Schools should take responsibility for their contribution to improved services and supports at the school-community intersect by putting their facilities at the disposal of community-based organizations during nonschool hours and providing school personnel with the training to enable them to make optimum use of nonacademic services and supports.
- Schools should invite parents and other community members and stakeholders to hold the school accountable for the achievement of their academic priorities.

As the various groups of school reformers, child and family advocates, community builders, and social service providers work to make the world a better place for children, it is worth remembering our common language and common purpose. Each group sincerely seeks to improve the world of the child and each group possesses a unique set of skills, capacities, and understandings that are central to the task at hand. What remains is for everyone to enter into this task with a strong commitment to shared goals, and to acting on an ever-deeper understanding of "what works." ⌘

Furthering

(continued from page 9)

connections is their changing nature over time. As we traced their origins and trajectories, we identified factors that appear to affect the development of connections and what they are able to achieve. These factors include the competence of the participating organizations and the formation of relationships among staff in them.

This research illuminates what appear to be both notable benefits and significant costs associated with school connections. The benefits correspond, for the most part, to the purposes for which connections are made. These include increasing the resources and perspectives available to support children's learning and development, and seeking to reduce the obstacles to learning and development presented by the problems affecting children and families, as well as those confronting schools and other organizations.

There are also significant costs associated with these arrangements, among them the substantial drain on time, attention, and other organizational resources they require, and the potential for distraction from an organization's core mission, from classroom teaching and learning in the case of schools.

In concluding, we analyze implications associated with the rapid spread of this approach to serving children and suggest ways to consider altering or expanding connections in order to increase reciprocity among schools and other organizations – not on the grounds of fairness, but with an eye toward enhancing the benefits for children. We also raise the importance of broadening the policy debate to consider alternatives to these tightly coupled connections, both to maximize the educational opportunities and problem-solving resources for children across schools and other organizations.

and to increase the synergy among the organizations involved. These kinds of alternatives include: (1) strategies that facilitate and credit young people for learning that takes place in schools and other organizations, (2) approaches that take into account the nature and variety of learning opportunities in schools and other organizations, and (3) ways like the development of forums – councils, associations, networks – that can facilitate less formal and more flexible relationships among organizations.

Finally, we raise questions about what more needs to be known – particularly about the impacts of connections – to inform effective policy and action. Too much weight now rests on connections with too little known about their impacts, first and foremost for children, for the organizations involved, and for the communities in which they are located.

Given the challenges facing children and the institutions that serve them, better understanding of connection impacts is critically needed as ever greater investments of limited resources are being made in connections of the kind described in this study. ⌘

Lessons

(continued from page 11)

surprising, given that it is primarily a school-linked service model, with strong components in health, mental health, employment preparation, substance abuse prevention, and recreation, but a relatively weak educational component. To achieve the improved educational outcomes so urgently demanded by today's educational authorities, collaborative service programs need to be matched to appropriate educational strategies that address students' academic problems in a major way.

Conclusions and recommendations include:

- Collaborative service programs provide a strong foundation for building programs that include academic strategies to help at-risk students succeed.
- Securing official support for collaboration from both sides of the organizational divide is critical to both the initial and continuing strength of the partnership.
- School-community collaborations benefit from the support of an intermediary agent.
- Community-school collaborations that focus on linking the school to vital services would be well advised to address the full age-range of young people.
- Community-school collaborations, however well designed and implemented, cannot substitute for reform of the schools, nor can a program succeed if it is simply an add-on to a failing school. ⌘

State

(continued from page 13)

Promising Practices

Support for a child and family agenda at the highest levels, through ongoing collaboration and opportunities to do so, can help support collaborative efforts in communities. A structured forum or formal structure, such as a children's "cabinet," can facilitate that collaboration and establish collaboration as an expectation. For example, members of Delaware's Family Services Cabinet Council stated that Governor Thomas R. Carper's commitment to children and families and to the Cabinet Council itself was very important to their ongoing collaborative efforts. But state education agency staff must also find mechanisms and tools that support coordination and collaboration at the school-community level, where assessment of community needs and decisions about school improvement are made.

Many educators agree that, for schools to meet tough new standards set out by the state and to improve student achievement, schools must involve parents and community partners in needs assessment, school governance, and improvement planning.

One of the most productive state roles might be to facilitate local-level decision making by providing flexibility and opportunities to plan comprehensively. Schools and districts are now able to engage in more comprehensive planning through the consolidated planning process authorized in the Improving America's Schools Act.

Future Directions

State education agencies can support comprehensive approaches to serving children and their families by: maintaining at the state level a vision for their well-being, making the connection between comprehensive approaches to supporting them and student achievement, and providing the funding and flexibility for schools and communities to determine how best to meet their own needs. The state agencies are seeking sound evaluation data, which shows the linkages between school-community collaboration and

improvements in student achievement levels and student well-being. This data strengthens state education agencies' capacities to provide funding and support for research-based approaches to improving student achievement. State education agency staff are also striving to create financing strategies for establishing and sustaining school-community collaborative partnerships. ⌘

Enhancing
(continued from page 15)

Additionally, many educators may remain skeptical of the potential for this kind of collaboration to improve teaching and learning for all students.

Recommendations

Among the strategies employed by ED to advance the notion that school-community collaboration may enhance youths' learning are: focusing attention on the importance of out-of-school resources to youths' performance in school, providing some additional funding for collaboration, and allowing waivers of certain federal restrictions. We have also suggested that, while these strategies may represent the start of a growing federal capacity to support school-community collaboration, ED could strengthen its efforts in three broad ways: expanding how it frames when and where learning takes place for youth; providing better incentives and signals; and helping grantees use federal waiver provisions and discretionary grant programs for collaboration around students' learning. In conclusion, the following are several specific recommendations for how ED might expand the scope and type of its current efforts to support school-community collaboration.

Broadening the frame. A federal strategy to support enhanced school-community connections for students' learning will require a stronger and broader articulation of how school-community connections relate to students' learning. In particular, this broader frame should include recognition that high quality youth organizations and other community agencies that provide alternatives to classroom instruction themselves are important settings in which youth may develop the skills necessary to succeed in school. The broader frame also should emphasize the additional and essential role for community agencies as organizations that move beyond removing barriers to learning and proactively enable learning.

Strengthening the incentives and signals. Increased funding, broader eligibility for receipt of funds, and model partnerships can provide important incentives and signals to schools, school districts, and states to utilize school-community collaboration.

Ensuring SEAs, LEAs, and schools use the flexibility provisions to enhance school-community collaboration. Efforts by ED to ensure that state educational agencies (SEAs), local educational agencies (LEAs), and schools use the flexibility provisions in waiver and discretionary grant programs should involve research, policy development, and technical assistance by the Department. Waiver provisions could provide better hooks to encourage states and districts to apply for them. Stronger support for using these waivers might include allowing state educational agencies, rather than the federal government, to approve waiver requests. ⌘

The CEIC *REVIEW*

Robert Sullivan
Editor

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